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ABSTRACT

This report describes a course sponsored by the Workers' Educational Association in England that is intended to fill a gap between informal discussion groups and access courses for higher education. Section 1 describes this intensive course, which occupies five hours per week and uses team teaching, one-to-one tutorials, formative evaluation, and a residential period, in addition to regular classroom sessions, and which aims to prepare participants for new roles in life and at work as well as for further courses. Aims and objectives and underlying beliefs are set forth. Section 2 explains who is attracted to the course, why they come, and what they get out of it. Section 3 identifies the organizational implications of setting up the course. Topics include funding, staff, administration, accommodation, and outreach and publicity. Section 4 presents an overview of the range of activities that could be part of a Second Chance To Learn course--topic-based learning, study skills, structure, and negotiation. Section 5 discusses the use of tutors, including team teaching, tutor training, and counseling and guidance. Sections 6 and 7 focus on two aspects of the course--tutorials (content, organization, problems) and residentials (learning, group cohesion, content, organization, problems). Key areas and methods of evaluation are addressed in Section 8. Section 9 provides a summary of each section and makes recommendations. Appendixes include the survey and sample course outline. (YLB)

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Second Chance to Learn?

A review of WEA

'Second Chance to Learn'
courses

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Pam Kearney, RESEARCHER

FOREWORD

This report describes a course, designed and mounted by the Workers' Educational Association, intended to fill a gap between informal discussion groups and access courses for higher education. It is an intensive course, occupying five hours per week, using team teaching, one-to-one tutorials, formative evaluation and a residential period, in addition to regular classroom sessions, and it aims to prepare participants for new roles in life and at work as well as for further courses.

The report offers advice on designing and running such a course, and describes the demands made on staff and students.

It will therefore be of interest to those committed to increasing access to education and training for adults, and raises questions about the level of resourcing realistically required if such provision is to be effective.

INTRODUCTION

This report is based on research carried out for the Further Education Unit by the Berks., Bucks. and Oxon. District of the Workers' Educational Association and Oxford University Department for External Studies. The research consisted of an intensive study of three 'Second Chance to Learn' courses which were run between October 1985 and May 1986 in Oxford and Milton Keynes. The courses, which were supported by grants from Milton Keynes Development Corporation and Oxford City Council, were free to participants and consisted of 20 full days with creche provision, regular individual tutorials and a short residential period. Each course recruited between 14 and 20 students and was run by two or three part-time tutors working together as a team with support from a tutor organiser. The model used is therefore of a high-quality, labour-intensive course designed to meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged adults. A description of the methodology used in this research is given in Appendix A.

Recent years have seen a proliferation of courses aimed at getting adults back into education and training: Access, Return to Learn, New Opportunities for Women, Fresh Start. There are similar themes running through all these initiatives, and the different names reflect different emphases according to the nature of the providers and the target audiences. In general this kind of course concentrates on building students' confidence and developing skills in a safe learning environment which is responsive to the needs of adults. Providers are becoming more aware of the need to consider such aspects as the timing, setting and length of courses, creche provision and student counselling and guidance. 'Second Chance to Learn' is often regarded as just another initiative in this area and it is true that there are many similarities, including all those aspects just mentioned. 'Second Chance to Learn', however, refers to a particular form of provision developed by some Districts of the Workers' Educational Association and university extramural departments which is based on a set of beliefs about the nature and extent of education for working class adults not necessarily held by most return-to-learn-type courses.

Central to the Second Chance approach is the belief that many children from working class backgrounds (and some ethnic minorities) benefit least from schooling, further and higher education. The same people are then least likely to attend any form of adult education (for a detailed breakdown of participation in adult education, see the ACACE report, *Adults: Their Educational Experience and Needs*¹). The organisation, curriculum and teaching methods used on Second Chance stem directly from a set of beliefs about how adults with minimal formal education can best be helped to develop their abilities, their critical thinking skills and their confidence, and about how to encourage personal autonomy both within learning and outside in the wider community.

It is hoped that this report will stimulate discussion around the needs of, and appropriate provision for, those adults who have traditionally remained outside institutions of adult education. It also contains a range of suggestions for running 'Second Chance to Learn' courses which it is hoped will prove useful to anyone working in this area.

WHAT IS 'SECOND CHANCE TO LEARN'?

In order to understand the 'Second Chance to Learn' approach it is useful to look at its origins in Liverpool and to remember the historical commitment of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) to adult education for working class people.

BACKGROUND

'Second Chance to Learn' began in Liverpool in the mid 1970s, as a result of adult educationists' involvement with groups campaigning in the local community. It was in response to specific needs for information and understanding of complex political issues that adult education found a role within the working class community. It was born of the need for increased power in order to contribute to the civic and democratic process (see Yarnit, 1980² and Edwards, 1986³). The emphasis was on helping working class people acquire the intellectual skills required to work for improvements in their communities. In order to do this, students need to be encouraged to understand how society works and how they can work collectively within it. These form two major strands in 'Second Chance to Learn' courses: social awareness and group work. As courses were developed, individual tutorials were found to be necessary to overcome individuals' learning problems and develop students' confidence. The specific target group that 'Second Chance to Learn' aims at are those who left school at the minimum school-leaving age with few, if any, qualifications. It is important to remember that although students may possess no formal qualifications, by the time they reach a 'Second Chance to Learn' course they have rich and varied experiences of life which must be used as the basis for further learning. The emphasis on information and understanding of complex political issues was picked up in Southampton when courses were developed there; these courses also included a feminist element². 'Second Chance to Learn' courses are concerned with both the individual and the group and, to improve group cohesion and co-operative learning, residential periods were included.

In the early 1980s a debate began in the Berks., Bucks. and Oxon. District of the WEA about how working class education could be developed in that area. It is not coincidental that 'Second Chance to Learn' has developed at the same time as rising unemployment. Concern about relevant education for unemployed adults had been increasing in all adult education circles and the district was attempting to formulate policies relevant to local needs. It was felt that the district's resources were spread too thinly – courses at unemployed workers' centres, welfare rights on council estates, etc. – and that these initiatives did not seem sufficient in themselves. It was decided that the district's resources should be channelled into a relatively small number of high quality opportunities for solid educational achievement. It was hoped that the experience could then be used to attract new sources of funding for this type of work.

COURSE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The first 'Second Chance to Learn' courses were run in Milton Keynes in 1983 and later extended to Oxford. The course aims and objectives were set out by the tutors as follows:

Aims of the course

- to increase students' self-confidence;
- to help students develop critical, independent thinking;
- to help students see themselves in relation to others whose views may differ from theirs, and to recognise others' ideas;
- to help students express themselves more clearly and creatively;
- to help students develop control over their own lives.

Objectives

By the end of the course a series of objectives were expected to be achieved.

Students should have the following knowledge:

- how to study more effectively, know their own strengths and weaknesses in regard to studying, know how to use their time more effectively;
- a variety of techniques they might use to improve reading, note-taking, etc.;
- which books and aids are available to help improve study skills;
- how writers and speakers can mislead.

Students should be able to perform the following skills:

- organise a weekly study schedule and stick to it;
- write more confidently;
- take notes from books, TV/films, speakers and meetings, critically;
- prepare and present orally an opinion/argument to a group;
- find information from library, town hall, etc.
- begin to understand and read material presented as graphs and statistics;
- begin to distinguish between 'straight' and 'crooked' thinking.

Students should develop the following attitudes:

- be more confident about improving their learning;
- enjoy learning;
- be co-operative, not competitive, about learning; be willing to question their own and others' views.

This list formed the basis of all subsequent 'Second Chance to Learn' courses in the district, though an additional objective became:

- know more about how society works by understanding such areas as Parliament, Local Government, the media, the NHS, etc.

UNDERLYING BELIEFS

The aims and objectives for 'Second Chance to Learn' emerged out of a set of beliefs about the desirability of education for working class adults (both unemployed and working) if they were to achieve control over their own lives, either as individuals or collectively. School experiences alienate many people from systematic or institutional learning, which then limits the opportunities they have for personal and intellectual development. They fail to see the relevance of mainstream adult education except for sporting or recreational purposes, and often these are outside their financial means (especially for those receiving state benefits or in low-paid work). This leads to a situation where they regard themselves as 'failures' and this in turn becomes a barrier to further participation in formal learning. 'Second Chance to Learn' aims to overcome this barrier by recognising the informal learning that people engage in during their day-to-day life experiences and using this as a basis for understanding wider issues, first by sharing those experiences and then by recognising the common patterns that emerge. This process enables people to reassess their abilities and, with the development of study skills, to analyse their situation in new ways. In order to do this, a safe environment is necessary and trust has to be built between student and tutor, based on the acknowledgement of people's experience and worth. This relationship demands that tutors should actively seek to give students control over their own learning by engaging in participative approaches to learning and by 'negotiating' at least some of the course content. Recognition of the practical barriers to students' achievement is also necessary, and courses are organised around the constraints of family commitments and financial hardship. Not only are courses free, but creche facilities are also free and, wherever possible, assistance with travelling expenses is made available. Course times and dates are arranged to fit in with school times, and locations are arranged which can be reached by public transport. Evaluation is integral to the process of learning, and courses are monitored to assess the level and relevance of the work. Course days concentrate on group activities and co-operative learning, but individual needs are catered for by the inclusion of regular tutorials. These sessions enable tutors to cope with the range of personal and academic needs that occur and to offer assistance and guidance at the appropriate level. The demands of family and work often make studying at home difficult, and provision is therefore made for students to attend a two-day residential period where uninterrupted learning can be undertaken. 'Second Chance to Learn' attempts to create a setting in which students can explore and develop their abilities and uses methods that facilitate this process.

CORE CONCEPTS IN 'SECOND CHANCE TO LEARN'

- 'Second Chance to Learn' students need to develop confidence in their own worth and ability if they are to achieve personal autonomy and make use of the skills they acquire on the course.
- 'Second Chance to Learn' students need to develop a range of skills including those associated with studying and intellectual development (e.g. note-taking, expressing an opinion, finding information, analysing arguments); groups skills which will enable them to work effectively with others (e.g. listening, problem-solving and committee skills); self-expression in writing and orally.
- 'Second Chance to Learn' students need knowledge of the way society works if they are to function effectively within it.
- 'Second Chance to Learn' students can best be helped to learn by treating them as equal adults who have already acquired considerable knowledge and who can take responsibility for developing their talents within a safe, structured environment if a degree of challenge and support is maintained.

In 'Second Chance to Learn' the process of learning is of as much importance as the content of what is learned, and both are enhanced when the learning is perceived as relevant to the learner. This means that more power is given to students to direct their own learning than is normally the case in adult education, and a wider range of activities are regarded as educational. When people have been put off educational activity, it is very difficult to get them back, but once they 'find' education again, they discover a means of opening up their lives in many diverse directions. As one student said, 'Thank you for giving me my brain back'.

This section attempts to explain, in more detail, who are attracted to a 'Second Chance to Learn' course, why they come and what they get out of it. The students described here attended courses in Oxford and Milton Keynes during the period of the research on which this report is based. The percentages given refer to the 49 students who were offered places on one of the three courses covered by this project. It is recognised that the numbers involved are small, but the results, both in terms of students' backgrounds and experience of the course, are comparable with the much larger study undertaken by Judith Edwards in Liverpool³. The students may therefore be regarded as fairly representative of Second Chance students in general, although each course will attract a different mix of people. Wherever possible, the students have been allowed to speak for themselves.

WHO ARE THEY?

The majority of 'Second Chance to Learn' students were women, with men forming less than 25% of any single course. Their ages ranged from 18 to 64, with nearly 60% in the 26 to 45 age group. Thirty per cent of the students on one course were from Afro-Caribbean or Asian backgrounds. Just over half the sample were married at the time of the course, and 69% had children under the age of 18, including 38% with pre-school-age children.

Ninety per cent of the students had left school at the minimum leaving age (which varied according to when they left school) and 59% had no qualifications at all. However, 75% reported attending some form of adult education or training since leaving school. Taking the very broadest definition of adult education, and including courses which had not been completed, there were still 20% of students who had had no contact with any form of education or training since leaving school.

Thirty-three per cent of students were unemployed, with 37% 'caring for home or children' and 18% in part-time work. The majority of students had done semi-skilled or unskilled work in offices, shops and factories.

The students gave a wide variety of replies to questions about their 'spare-time' activities:

- 31% belonged to a club or association, e.g. dog training club;
- 46% took part in sporting activities, e.g. swimming, badminton;
- 28% were involved in voluntary work of some kind, e.g. helping in schools, playgroups.

A closer look at the figures revealed that 35% of students did not have to leave home to pursue any of their interests, and several had apparently no interests outside their families. There is always a problem with interpreting this kind of data because some students have partners, children and part-time jobs, and this does not leave much spare time. It may, however, explain why students gained so much from the social side of the course and from working in groups.

A detailed breakdown of information on students is given in Appendix B, and profiles of three students are given in Appendix C.

WHY DO THEY COME?

The overwhelming response to this question was 'confidence'. Students lacked confidence generally and particularly in their ability to express themselves, both orally and in written form. Some felt inadequate when meeting or communicating with others. They felt the lack of a body of knowledge to draw on and the skills needed to study effectively. They often expressed this as having 'missed out' the first time around (i.e. at school) and of wanting to 'make up for it' now, as adults, before it was too late. Many students felt that they could do more than they were doing and saw the course as an opportunity to do better in the future, usually in terms of the type of work that they could do.

'(Student's child) will be at school when I'm 30 – just starting school. I could go and get myself a part-time job when I'm 30, and then I've got another 30 years after that – to work. And I don't just want to sit... putting printed circuit boards together. I want to do something. I feel cleverer... I want to learn a lot... I want to ask questions and find out WHY things are the way they are.'

The students' lack of confidence can be understood by looking at their experiences in childhood. Their home and school lives, which are inextricably linked, show a pattern of disruption which can be roughly divided into two areas, although most students suffered from a combination of factors.

Moving home and school

Many students had made several changes of school as a result of their family circumstances, e.g. father in services, parents divorced. Some students had been evacuated during the war, and one person had spent long periods in hospital.

'At one time we never stayed in a place more than nine months... we had a few family problems... it was a terrible time... we'd go from one school to the other and then go back to the same district, and I didn't want to go back to the same school. I would go to another school and things like this.'

'I adored school, I really liked it... But it got to the stage where I became the clown of the class... in a way it was 'cos we had problems at home, but I was always the idiot in the class... the naughty one and things like this.'

'It was easier to make friends with people that never went to school, people that skived and did everything wrong... everybody else used to get the blame! I was just the poor new girl and everybody was leading me astray...'

'I'd left school in the Easter and I got married in the August 'cos I was pregnant in the June...'

These problems were particularly difficult for those students who came to England as children. They had to cope with new cultural and educational environments and in certain cases with a different language as well.

'... it was difficult when I first came to England 'cos I had such an Irish accent... I went to the junior school and of course as it was in a small place I was immediately noticed. And every time I'd answer a question, you know, I put my hand up, it would be said about twenty-five times behind me in exactly the way I said it. So I got so that I didn't actually bother doing it... bother putting my hand up or anything like that... because of that, I grew to hate school... I was doing quite well in Ireland, you know, and I enjoyed it, but when we came over here, I felt REALLY sort of like I WAS a REAL outsider.'

'The first school was very bad... they treated us... as outcasts. The headmistress was very straight-laced and very middle class, and I came from a family of ten anyway, and my parents couldn't afford the uniform for the school, which wasn't compulsory, so we could wear anything, but in actual fact all the children were wearing the uniform...'

'... the worst part, I think, was not being able to make my parents understand.'

Problems at home

Many of the students' problems were the result of poverty, e.g. lack of money, overcrowded conditions. Some women students were expected to work at home because their mothers were ill or not present at all. The majority of the students were not expected to stay on at school because their parents did not think they were clever enough, even where they had shown some aptitude for study. This was usually because they were expected to contribute to the family income but was also, in the case of girls, because education was not regarded as relevant. Some students experienced violence at home and bullying at school.

'I didn't have a very good school life at all really because I had problems at home because there wasn't a mother at home... I used to have to do the cooking and the cleaning, and by the time I got to school I was usually too tired to do anything anyway. Not because there was so much cleaning and cooking but because I used to mess around as well. There was no-one to come in of a night and say, "Now look here! You can get to bed."... So we used to mess around, my brother and I, until the early hours of the morning...'

Not all the students had been unhappy at school (or home), and for many the decision to apply for the 'Second Chance to Learn' course was prompted more by their current circumstances than by memories of past 'failures'. Many appeared to be in the middle of a period of major change in their lives, such as redundancy or divorce. Others regarded 'Second Chance to Learn' as an opportunity to effect change, for instance, getting out of a rut or preparing for a return to work. Most were seeking a chance to discover what they were really capable of doing, and the course was therefore a positive step towards this aim.

'I feel as though I've got a little bit of potential, probably for writing or organising or something in that direction, as well as being sort of useful with my hands. I'd like to feel that I'd got some sort of brain capacity as well, which I've always tried to play down in the past because I haven't had confidence really in my own sort of academic abilities. I would like to feel that if this course sort of reveals that I HAVE got SOME potential in that direction, it might have been useful.'

PROBLEMS OF ATTENDING 'SECOND CHANCE TO LEARN'

Students faced a number of problems with attending such an intensive and time-consuming course. Many of these problems were practical, some were the result of their circumstances and some were personal. All the problems are common to adults in education:

- Time was a major problem for some of the women with families and part-time jobs; one full day a week and an hour's tutorial, with all the travelling involved, was difficult to fit in.
- The cost of travelling to the course and a tutorial was quite high, especially for people on state benefits or low incomes.
- Studying at home was difficult.
- Families were not always supportive; some husbands resented their wives' involvement in the course.
- Some of the learning was very personal and some students felt threatened when their beliefs were challenged or their prejudices exposed.
- Having to overcome the fear of failure, especially at the beginning of the course.

In the light of these problems and of the pressure on some students to find employment, it is not surprising that a number did not complete the course. Despite the considerable effort made by tutors to help overcome obstacles, of the 49 students offered places, only 29 (59%) remained at the end of the courses. Where reasons for leaving were given, they included finding work, ill health, family responsibilities and marital breakdown.

WHAT DO THEY GET FROM 'SECOND CHANCE TO LEARN'?

All 22 students interviewed six months after the courses had ended said they had gained in confidence. When pressed to explain in what way they were more confident, the main replies were:

- in expressing their opinions, both orally and in writing; some people included having opinions of their own and defending them when others disagreed;
- to go on to other things, especially to continue learning and feeling able to learn;
- in meeting new people, being part of a group and speaking in front of people;
- in general, feeling more able to tackle problems in their lives, to try new things;
- in dealing with people in authority or officials;
- in being able to say 'no' to people.

The two main reasons given for this were:

- the support of the group;
- being treated as an equal within the group and by the tutors.

Students also reported increased feelings of self worth, a better understanding of current events and having made new friends.

'Yes, I am more confident. I have gained a little self-discipline, concentration and motivation. I think I understand a little more what I want from my life.'

'Yes, confidence to speak out and give my point of view; to go out and meet people; to sit at the front of a class instead of the back.'

'Yes. The support that was given by the tutors, particularly, was wonderful. You were allowed to question everything and not feel ridiculous or ignorant. The knowledge that we (the group) were all feeling the same – worried, scared and self-conscious – brought us together and built us up.'

WHERE DO THEY GO AFTER 'SECOND CHANCE TO LEARN'?

On finishing the course, almost all the students intended to go on to other courses and continue their studies, either with specific goals in mind, for example – social work qualification, or in more general terms. Seventy-three per cent had, after six months, started other courses, but of these 31% had been unable to complete the course because of the level of work, the lack of child-care or the teaching methods. At the time of the interview (October), 73% were not participating in any course, and the reasons given were:

- the cost of courses;
- the lack of child-care;
- inability to get discretionary grants;
- no suitable provision in area of interest;
- had started work;
- not accepted or courses full;
- the cost and difficulty of travelling by public transport at night, e.g. the last bus from Milton Keynes to some outlying areas is at 7.15pm.

Some of these students felt very let down and frustrated about the difficulties of continuing with their studies.

'... some of the other courses some of the other girls went on, you had to pay for them. Unfortunately, my husband's not working so I just couldn't afford to pay to go on them. And then there was the travel expenses and everything. So I just couldn't do it.'

'... it's a horrible anticlimax when you finish with Second Chance. I think in the end, with all those career people coming, they really make you believe that you can go on out there and do more things. And for weeks afterwards I remember I really felt like ringing somebody up and saying "Look! Where is all these classes?" You know, "Where is all these career things I could've been doing that I heard about?" They're just not available.'

Although not designed as a 'return to work' course, many of the activities on 'Second Chance to Learn' were valuable in this respect. In particular, having confidence in their ability to learn made students more likely to consider, and benefit from, retraining. It also encouraged self-assessment and so enabled students to identify their strengths, weaknesses and interests. For those students who did decide to retrain for work in new areas, the results were disappointing for the same reasons as those already given as difficulties with attending courses. Also, the majority of students did not qualify for MSC-sponsored schemes, and there were few alternatives.

A small number of students did find work during, or shortly after, the course, but it would be difficult to support a claim that attending the course was mainly responsible. It was clear, however, that attending as demanding a course as 'Second Chance to Learn' (in terms of the amount of time and effort involved) did affect students' willingness to try new areas of employment and increased their determination to persevere.

On the whole, students were very positive about the experience of attending the course and the methods used on it, and particularly about their relationship with tutors. Many students had used their time on the course to take stock of their lives and themselves and to make plans for the future. Although they were sorry to lose the support of the group, there was a generally optimistic feeling about themselves and what they could do.

'I will always be grateful to the WEA for giving me the opportunity to attend this course. It has made me rethink what I want in the future. (The tutors) have both given me a great deal of encouragement. I'm determined to continue my education and reach my goal. The opportunity to put many of my feelings in writing has been very helpful in helping me to come to terms with events in my life.'

DEVELOPING 'SECOND CHANCE TO LEARN'

There are many reasons why an organisation might decide to run 'Second Chance to Learn' courses, but there are two specific needs such a course can meet:

- It can fill a gap between adult basic education or informal discussion groups and access courses for higher education.
- It can be an appropriate response to the needs of those working class, unemployed or unwaged people whose lack of confidence and study skills makes it difficult for them to take advantage of the opportunities that already exist (e.g. 'O' levels, retraining).

'Second Chance to Learn' courses are different from much of the conventional adult education programme, both in the way they are run and in the students they seek to attract. If the courses are to be flexible enough to meet the needs of a diverse and sometimes reluctant audience, then the organisation behind them must be flexible and imaginative in its approach. Innovative work stretches both the people involved and the structures within which they work. Some of these demands can be anticipated, and the more planning that is done in advance, the less tension will arise during the running of the course.

The following areas merit special attention.

FUNDING

'Second Chance to Learn' courses offer a substantial educational opportunity to those educationally disadvantaged groups already mentioned and, as such, require a considerable financial commitment on the part of the provider. At a time when overall funding of adult education is being rigorously scrutinised and more emphasis is being placed on fee income, many organisations, including the WEA, are finding it difficult to justify spending in this area of work. At the same time, however, unemployment remains high and there is increased pressure on adults to reassess their situation and retrain in new skills. More women are contemplating or actively seeking work outside the home, and people are retiring earlier and living longer. While the number of young people leaving school continues to decline, there are increasing numbers of adults for whom education and training become relevant. Within this context, 'Second Chance to Learn' can be seen as part of a wider reorientation of adult education and further education and responsible bodies to the changing needs of a changing population.

The costs involved in running 'Second Chance to Learn', based on the model used here, will vary according to the existing staff and resources of the providers. While capital expenditure on the course is low, the cost of the teaching input, of team teaching and individual tutorials, is very high. In comparison with a model of adult education based on a tutor with up to 20 (and sometimes more) students for two hours per week, 'Second Chance to Learn' offers 12 to 16 students two tutors for five hours each week plus one hour of an individual tutor's time. The extra input in tutor time is necessary if students are to overcome the obstacles that have prevented them from learning in the past, and progress on to other

courses or training. Students who have already achieved a measure of success in educational terms require less direct involvement with tutors and are more likely to be supplementing existing knowledge or skills. It is also necessary to expend more time and money in the early stages, attracting students, because potential students are difficult to reach. A breakdown of the costs involved are given in Appendix D.

Not all the costs mentioned in Appendix D or in the report generally are confined to 'Second Chance to Learn' courses. Much of the organisation of the course, including new administrative procedures and staff training, should be regarded as part of institutional development and organisational growth. Accommodation and materials may already be available, and with the decline in some traditional courses, staff and resources may become available for new work.

The possibility of outside funding should also be considered, for instance grants from REPLAN, MSC, EEC and other institutions or charities. Some parts of the course are more likely to be funded in this way, such as development work, residentials, evaluation, creche, or where specific educational or practical needs are being met. Some LEAs have a policy on subsidies or remission of fees for the unemployed and may therefore be prepared to cover some of the course costs if unemployed people are attracted in sufficient numbers. Local government bodies without a specific educational remit, such as city councils and development corporations, may also be willing to support courses for disadvantaged groups. Sharing costs or using other institutions' facilities may also be worth considering, e.g. accommodation, creche.

STAFF

'Second Chance to Learn' courses need staff who are not only flexible and imaginative in their approach to running courses but are also committed to working with educationally disadvantaged groups. They need a realistic understanding of the needs and abilities of students in both educational and practical terms. This includes an awareness of the effects of unemployment, low incomes and the social isolation of women with young children.

Existing staff, however well-intentioned or proficient in their areas of study, may find it difficult to adapt their teaching style or be unwilling to enter into a more equal relationship with students. This is obviously most important for teaching staff, but also includes administrators and office staff. A friendly receptionist can do much to alleviate the anxiety of a new or prospective student, especially when the person is unfamiliar with the workings of educational establishments. It is vital that office staff are kept fully informed where new systems of enrolment or fee collection are introduced. An understanding of the needs of the student group and the innovative nature of the work would be helpful at all levels, including the governing body.

Staff responsible for organising courses are in particular need of the following:

- easy access to cash (for small payments);
- direct access to someone who can make decisions quickly;
- secretarial support which can respond quickly;
- a network of local community groups and other providers;
- a personal support network.

ADMINISTRATION

A flexible approach to administrative procedures is required to meet the particular needs of 'Second Chance to Learn' students. This has been found in other studies, e.g. *Retraining Adults*, a 1986 FEU report on education and training for unemployed adults⁴, and *Link into Learning*, a report about basic education students moving into mainstream courses, published by ALBSU in 1986⁵. The areas that need to be considered include:

- responding to initial enquiries;
- payment of fees in advance;
- keeping registers and records generally;
- assessment of students' progress;
- evaluation of courses;
- provision of resources and materials for courses.

Although some of these areas would not appear to be administrative problems at first sight, it is often the case that 'Second Chance to Learn' courses require different procedures and make heavy demands on secretarial staff. For example, taped evaluation discussions may need transcribing, or tutors may have to produce material for sessions at short notice. Many of these areas can become problems if the course is held off site.

The main areas of concern are those related to enrolment and selection of students and financial matters. It is essential that finance staff are involved in setting up appropriate systems for payments and collection of fees or administration of grants. It is also essential that 'Second Chance to Learn' is seen as a different but equally important kind of provision and not as marginal, either by administrative staff or the institution.

ACCOMMODATION

Ideally, a 'Second Chance to Learn' course needs one or two teaching rooms with additional informal areas and access to a kitchen or canteen. Space for a creche should be considered separately, but must be close by. Alternatives to a classroom atmosphere should be sought, perhaps in community centres, especially for the early part of the course. It may be possible (or even preferable) to transfer to a college building for the second term. This helps people overcome their resistance to returning to an educational institution while encouraging them to regard themselves as serious students.

In addition to the course-day, space needs to be allocated for pre-course interviews (again informality is important), individual tutorials (spread over the week), and tutors' team meetings. 'Second Chance to Learn' is not a one-day-a-week event but a series of related activities which vary from week to week. It is a great advantage if a base can be created where tutors can meet to prepare sessions and which students can use as a study centre with access to books, materials and quiet.

OUTREACH AND PUBLICITY

'Second Chance to Learn' courses seek to attract people who would not normally participate in adult education, many of whom still regard themselves as failures and incapable of learning. Experience of outreach work aimed at unemployed people suggests that word-of-mouth is the best method of reaching people, but this usually relies on ex-students recommending the course and can only happen once the course is established. Starting the first one, therefore, presents some difficulties, and considerable time and effort are required to get even a small number of students.

The co-operation of local newspapers and radio is valuable in reaching the right audience, especially if they will carry stories or interviews about the course rather than advertisements. Ex-students who are willing to be interviewed about their experiences can get the message across better than tutors or organisers.

There is a need for carefully worked-out leaflets and posters which emphasize who the course is for, that there are no entry requirements (except basic reading and writing), and no examinations. The language should be direct, simple and friendly. Pictures and cartoons need to be used with care as they can present a view which was not intended, e.g. a picture of someone outside the employment office suggests students have to be unemployed; women with children can be interpreted as women-only. Prepaid return postcards can be attached for a small extra cost.

Publicity material needs to be displayed in places where people go regularly, e.g. unemployment offices, post offices, doctors' surgeries or health centres. It could also be placed in working men's clubs, launderettes, local shops and community centres. Furthermore, it needs to reach a large group of professionals who can refer people; these would include social workers, health visitors, probation officers and head teachers. The leaflets should be accompanied by further background information sheets and, where possible, personal contact, if professionals are to be able to recommend suitable applicants. It is necessary to build a network of sympathetic and informed people who have direct contact with the target groups (unemployed people, housewives, ethnic minorities, single parents).

Another avenue is direct contact with groups in the community, including visits to tenants' groups, mother-and-toddler groups and self-help groups. It is important that personal contact is made easy, and one way of doing this is to give the name of a specific person to contact. This person should be able to give full and friendly information about the course and set up an informal meeting soon after the first contact. It may be necessary to pay part-time tutors to do this, prior to the start of each course, but applications will be received throughout the year and someone should be available to follow them up immediately.

This section has attempted to identify the organisational implications of setting up 'Second Chance to Learn' courses without necessarily suggesting solutions. Each organisation will have to develop procedures and policies relevant to its own needs, but it is hoped that advance warning of possible problems will alert providers to the need for early discussions with as many people as possible. Appendix E gives a checklist of questions which should be considered before setting up a 'Second Chance to Learn' course.

'Second Chance to Learn' courses are constructed around a series of themes or topics, using a multidisciplinary approach. Emphasis is placed on developing study skills and building students' confidence in their ability to take control of their own learning. Students' own experiences are used as a starting point for the group, and, wherever possible, students are actively engaged in making decisions about the content of the course. Sessions attempt to combine the development of study skills with the acquisition of a better understanding of the subject matter. Each course day is structured to include practical activities and allow time for reflection and evaluation. Varying the tutors, the content and the pace of work helps to keep students' attention throughout the day.

An example of a course outline, showing the main topics and study skills covered, is given in Appendix F.

TOPIC-BASED LEARNING

Focusing on a topic rather than a discipline encourages students to relate what they learn to their own lives. Students do not come with empty bowls to be filled up by tutors who somehow have 'the truth', but as people who can view their learning as adding to and extending their existing knowledge or experience. Acknowledging and valuing what students already know is important; first because learning is more likely to take place when new information is being added to, or fitted into, existing knowledge; and second because it increases students' self-esteem and therefore their confidence in tackling new subjects.

Topics relate not only to students' previous experiences but also to their present circumstances and future lives. This is an important determinant of what is included in a 'Second Chance to Learn' course. While some students are eager for 'knowledge' of any kind, most have, in the past, avoided any contact with an educational system that appears to have no relevance to their 'real' lives. The course should therefore foster their confidence in their ability to learn, and to apply that knowledge, through understanding the society in which they live. An example of a session on the media which built on students' collective experience and linked a residential period to the normal course day is given in Box 1 (page 18).

Topics can be very broad such as 'education', 'the media' and 'work', or more specific as with 'the National Health Service', 'local government' or 'unemployment'. Even quite specific topics generate more possibilities than the course can accommodate, and decisions have to be made about what aspects can be covered and how. A 'Second Chance to Learn' course can only begin to open up areas for study; the biggest problems arise around what has to be left out. Brainstorming is a useful technique which gives students an overview of a topic and reinforces how much they already know. Input from tutors ensures that major areas are not left out (see Appendix G for an example of a brainstorm on health). Decisions can then be made about which aspects they are particularly interested in studying. If they are unable to reach agreement on a small number of aspects to be studied by the whole group, tutors can suggest either that they run different options or that students undertake project work to look at specific areas of interest, individually or in small groups. This may not be a suitable approach too early in the course as students are easily overwhelmed by the size and complexity of topics.

BOX 1

EXAMPLE OF A SESSION ON THE MEDIA

The week following the residential period, tutors had prepared a media exercise which consisted of a radio news report, edited into a local radio news programme, concerning the residential. It claimed that a student had complained about the WEA wasting taxpayers' money by sending 'Second Chance to Learn' students on a free weekend where they had spent their time shopping, drinking and going to discos.

The students were split into two groups.

GROUP 1 were reporters who had to interview the students and produce a follow-up story for the six o'clock news.

GROUP 2 were students responding to the news item, preparing a press release and holding a press conference.

The reporters taped the interview with the group and prepared their follow-up news item. When the students

heard the second story, they were horrified at how their words had been misrepresented in the editing.

When the new items and press release had been heard by the whole group, they were asked for their reactions. Their immediate responses included: frightening, difficult to say things that can't be twisted, stress of using microphone, guilt at going on residential, enjoyable, power of reporters. They were then asked what they had learned from the exercise, and their replies included: keep away from the press, think before you speak, words are powerful, question what you read.

The process of working through people's feelings and ideas was crucial since the students had taken the criticisms personally. However, at the end of the session, they reasserted their belief that the residential had in fact been enjoyable and educational.

Educational is often used as the first topic on a course as all the students have some experience to draw on and it is especially useful when students have different cultural backgrounds. Comparing their different experiences allows students to discuss such questions as: 'What is or should be taught in schools?' 'How should discipline be maintained?' 'What does school not teach you?' and 'how important is education in society?' In response to such questions, tutors can introduce material concerning historical or political dimensions and so take the discussion out of the personal and into the general. It is also an appropriate time to explain how 'Second Chance to Learn' differs from school and the responsibility students have, as adults, for their own learning. Box 2 illustrates how a variety of different disciplines can be drawn on to develop sessions around the topic of education.

There are, of course, dangers in starting with people's own experiences, and tutors need to consider how they will approach the subject and what they hope to achieve. Some students may not want to discuss their childhood because of painful memories, and others may be afraid that what they have to say is insignificant or 'boring'. Where students are being asked to express opinions, tutors need to consider ways of ensuring that differences of opinion can be maintained with animosity or anxiety. It is important that people are respected for their differences and that trust is built up within the group from an early stage, if people's experiences are to be used as the basis for study. However, this does leave the tutors with the problem of what to do about students who make racist or sexist remarks. This can be dealt with explicitly when laying down ground rules for discussion, or more discreetly by individual tutors if the need arises. If the latter course is chosen, damage may already have been done to interpersonal relationships within the group and the cohesion of the group undermined.

BOX 2**APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF EDUCATION****APPROACHES**

Experiential	Political
Historical	Philosophical
Cross-cultural	Psychological
Sociological	Linguistic

SOURCES

The students
 Literature, including autobiography
 and poetry
 Photographs
 Statistics
 Archive material, especially local
 Research evidence
 Government reports
 Newspaper articles
 TV programmes/videos
 Books
 Journals

POSSIBLE SESSIONS

Creative writing
 Understanding graphs, charts and
 percentages
 How children learn to talk
 Intelligence testing
 Inequality in education by race/
 gender/class
 Alternative education systems
 Straight and crooked thinking
 State v. private education
 How do we learn?
 Sex education in schools
 Women and science
 Education in the future
 The difference between training and
 education

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

Putting pins in a map	Role-plays
Reading autobiographical accounts/ poetry about schooldays	Essays
Writing stories/poems about school	Maths
Interviewing a head teacher	Conducting surveys and presenting information
Interviewing each other	Projects
Exercises	Discussion
	Debate

STUDY SKILLS

It has been stated that 'Second Chance to Learn' is more than simply another access course, and this is reflected most clearly in the approach to teaching and study skills. Although students are helped to develop the skills needed for entry to further and higher education, they are also encouraged to see where and how these skills can be used in other areas of their lives (see Box 3).

BOX 3**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDY SKILLS AND LIFE****STUDY SKILLS**

Cognitive skills
 e.g. critical thinking/number work/
 reading and writing/finding and using
 information
 Group skills
 e.g. listening/chairing a committee/
 working co-operatively
 Interpersonal skills
 e.g. tolerance of other people's
 opinions/assertion training/self-
 presentation

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

All areas of everyday life including
 educational and political activity,
 bringing up a family and using leisure
 time creatively
 Joining local groups to work more
 effectively in the community
 Employment
 Improving both personal and working
 relationships
 Developing self-confidence
 Dealing with 'professionals'

Group skills are particularly important in empowering people, since our society relies heavily on committee structures. 'Second Chance to Learn' students have, in the past, become school governors, joined pressure groups and started their own branches of the WEA.

Some skills, like note-taking and maths, need to be introduced in specific sessions but should be practised in relation to whatever topic is being studied, for example understanding charts and graphs in relation to educational achievement by race, sex and class. All sessions involve the use of some skills, either in understanding the content or carrying out the methods, and tutors should develop the habit of pointing out what skills have been employed; concentrating, listening, evaluating, extracting and recording are all involved in taking notes from a speaker, for example. Women particularly benefit from an exercise which illustrates the skills they already use in running a home.

The main problem with teaching study skills is the range in levels of ability within the group. Most students have no clear idea of the real extent of their abilities or needs when they start a 'Second Chance to Learn' course. They often discount the independent learning they have done because it was not legitimised by an educational institution. It is therefore essential that tutors allow for a range of ability when planning a session and, if necessary, deal with students with severe difficulties separately, perhaps in tutorial time. Students are, on the whole, extremely co-operative and tolerant of each other's needs and the more able students may prefer to sit through a session pitched too low for them rather than break up the group.

It should be noted that most of the methods used on a 'Second Chance to Learn' course are new to the students, who were taught with a 'talk and chalk' approach. Brainstorms, role-plays and individual project work need to be carefully explained, both in terms of what is expected of students and of the educational value of the exercise. Some students find it hard to accept that learning can take place through discussion and complain about the amount of time wasted 'just chatting'. It is therefore important to ensure that discussions are drawn to a close by stating the results or main arguments and not left hanging in mid-air as people wander off for a coffee-break.

The myths surrounding 'academic ability' or IQ need to be broken down if students are to be released from the labels acquired at school. The majority of students do not lack the ability to learn but the skills and the confidence to trust their own judgement.

STRUCTURE

For many students who have not done any systematic study since leaving school, a full day (9.30am to 3pm) of concentrated effort is very tiring. In order to help students maintain their interest without overwhelming them, tutors should give careful thought to how the day is structured. Managing time is often a major problem since there is always a lot to do and the students need to work through ideas very slowly, especially if written material is provided or required from them. Other students can become bored and lose interest in the content if left too long. Although this problem is common to all teaching, it becomes more disruptive in a group with a wide range of ability and low morale. It is therefore essential that tutors keep the amount of reading to a minimum and allow slower students the opportunity to complete written work at home if necessary. Alternatively, encouraging students with different abilities to work co-operatively can overcome this problem to some extent.

When planning the overall structure of the day, tutors should also allow time for reflection on the learning that has taken place and the skills used. Too often, pressures of time tempt them to move on too quickly and students feel frustrated and rushed. Since 'Second Chance to Learn' is an introductory course, many issues will be raised which cannot be dealt with on the course, and students can be left with an inadequate grasp of some of the key concepts, as well as doubts about their ability to understand. It is essential that tutors are clear about their own expectations of sessions and admit the limitations of the course.

BOX 4

EXAMPLE OF A COURSE DAY

9.30	Class diary and notices	
9.45	The development of compulsory education in England	Short talk with handout
10.15	Break	
10.30	Sexual stereotyping in schools	Exercise
11.40	Discussion of homework	Small groups
12.15	Lunch	
1.00	Course committee	
1.20	Roles in groups and groundrules for discussion	Short talk, handout and structured discussion
2.40	Evaluation and homework	Responses to 'What have we learned today?'
3.00	End	

It is useful to plan, into the framework of the course, regular features for which students are responsible. This can take the form of a class committee, class diary, ten-minute slot or reading students' own work. The class committee not only enables students to comment on the course and make decisions about it but also to run a committee where everyone has the opportunity to chair the meeting and take minutes. The class diary is usually written up by a different student each week and, if read out at the beginning of the following week, serves to remind people of what they did and so assists continuity. The ten-minute slot is used on some courses to encourage students to share information about what is

going on locally. They can also be encouraged to review films or books or raise issues of interest from newspapers. This is similar to a specific time set aside for students to read their own work, but the emphasis is on information-sharing rather than creative writing. Students enjoy sharing their work, and many people discover an interest in writing for pleasure. Although these activities can be difficult to fit into a busy timetable, they serve two important functions:

- They break up the day, giving variety and releasing the pressure built up during the main sessions.
- They encourage students to be active and to take responsibility for the success of the course rather than be passive and totally reliant on the tutors.

NEGOTIATION

'Second Chance to Learn' courses vary in the amount of negotiation that takes place and the level at which it occurs. Some tutors attempt to involve students directly in planning the content and running the course, in order to break down the traditional barriers between teachers and taught. Other tutors see negotiation more in terms of responding to the specific needs and interests of the student group. Whatever the reasons for including students in making decisions about the course, there are many difficulties inherent in the process.

From the students' point of view, they do not expect to be consulted about the course and often demand that tutors 'act like teachers' since that is the only model of learning they have. Their insecurity about their ability to learn makes them want the familiar roles, even where these have caused unhappy experiences in the past. Students often do not know what they want from the course, nor do they know how to ask for what they find they do want. Even when they become more aware of their own needs, they can try to please the tutors by guessing what it is that tutors want them to say. It is difficult to get away from the idea that there are 'right' answers as they sometimes feel manipulated into doing what the tutors want to do. Sometimes dominant members of the group can direct decisions which other members are unhappy about. On the other hand, when negotiation is successful, they enjoy feeling that the power is in their own hands and that their opinions are respected. It also enables tutors to tailor the course to their actual, rather than their perceived, needs (see Box 5).

BOX 5

A CAUTIONARY TALE

As a result of experience on a previous course, tutors felt that the students needed to visit a library and learn how to look up references before being asked to do projects. As the librarian of the school where the course was situated had offered to show them round that library, they decided to organise a visit. This was arranged at short notice when the librarian was free, rather than at an appropriate point in the programme.

The librarian 'talked down' to the students 'as if they were five-year-olds', showed them the tickets and pointed out the shelf where the recipe books were kept. The students were outraged by the way they had been treated. In the discussion that followed it became clear that several students were already adept at finding their way around a library and using the index. One student was familiar with the system for storing archive material. Only one student had never been in a library before.

Clearly there are several lessons to be learned from this experience:

- Tutors should find out what students already know before making plans; students who have knowledge in an area can be encouraged to share it.
- Tutors on limited budgets may be tempted to accept any offer of help but consideration should be given to the appropriateness for adult students.
- Assumptions made about 'Second Chance to Learn' students are often wrong.

Tutors can feel very uneasy about negotiating a course, especially the first time. Since they cannot predict the outcome, they are unable to plan the course too far in advance and must respond at short notice to students' decisions. Negotiation is also time-consuming and there is pressure to 'get on with the job'. Tutors have to help the group make decisions which satisfy as many members as possible without allowing disagreements to disrupt relationships within the group. They also have to be able to handle criticisms if the sessions they devise do not appear to have complied with the decisions reached.

Negotiation is easiest when there is a strong group feeling or clear goals. Since 'Second Chance to Learn' has no set curriculum and no examination requirements, the range of interests and diversity of experience make negotiation desirable but difficult. Most courses arrive at a compromise position, between asking students what they want to do and telling them what they should do, by discussing a range of possibilities based on what they can offer. This is usually more evident towards the second half of the course, when students are more confident and trust has been established within the group.

Negotiation is best carried out within a structure which makes clear what students are being asked to decide. It can be incorporated into existing sessions or time can be set aside for a planning session. The ideas shown in Box 6 illustrate different approaches, and negotiation should be regarded as an ongoing process linked to evaluation.

BOX 6

APPROACHES TO NEGOTIATION

- On Week 1 students are asked to complete the following:
 - I would like to know more about...
 - I would like to be able to...
 - After the course I hope to...
- Brainstorm a topic and then find groups of ideas that are related, put in order of priority or choose a small number to pursue (see Appendix G).
- Tutors present a range of options and ask students to put in order of interest; individually, then in pairs, fours – until whole group agrees a list.
- Course committee is presented with the task of reaching a majority decision on a range of options provided by the tutors.
- Tutors devise a programme leaving gaps for students to fill either with new topics or extensions of topics already covered.
- Tutors can ask students to work out their own options and decide whether they want to pursue them separately, in small groups or choose one to be studied by the whole group.
- Where tutors have identified problems with study skills they can offer students the choice of whether they want an extra session and, if so, where it would fit in the programme; what could be left out.
- Students can be encouraged to suggest and organise trips and to decide whether or not to invite speakers.

It is impossible to deal adequately with the full range of activities that could be part of a 'Second Chance to Learn' course. Each course develops a format of its own with which both tutors and students feel comfortable. A balance must be found between frustrating the students with too superficial a taste of a subject and covering the range of subjects and skills that need to be included. Students can be helped to understand this problem by being included in decisions about what the course should contain. Students should also be encouraged to regard 'Second Chance to Learn' as the beginning of learning and not as an end in itself.

Good 'Second Chance to Learn' tutors come from many disciplines and are not necessarily trained teachers. They are, in fact, nearly as diverse as the student group. What they have in common can be categorised as:

- the ability to 'think on their feet', analysing situations and rethinking their material to suit the audience in an intellectually disciplined way;
- an awareness of the problems of the student group in both their material and educational circumstances;
- a commitment to working collaboratively with students in non-competitive groups, and to enabling students to take control of their own learning by negotiation.

Given the number of teaching hours involved and the diversity of topics covered on a 'Second Chance to Learn' course, it is necessary to have a combination of tutors with different skills working together as a team.

TEAM TEACHING

Team teaching occurs when at least two tutors share the work of running a course, not simply by dividing up the available time but by working together to decide on appropriate content and methods. It also usually means that more than one tutor is present during sessions and can mean that both tutors actively lead the session (although this is not common). Most often one tutor takes overall responsibility for leading a session and a second tutor plays a supportive role as necessary. This can vary from a group maintenance role to direct involvement in exercises or leading a small group discussion. Depending on the number of students and the type of activity in which they are engaged, more than two tutors may be necessary. Extra tutors are especially useful where students are involved in detailed work with which they are unfamiliar and about which they feel particularly nervous, e.g. individual or small group projects and statistics or maths of any kind.

'One of the attractive features of it is that we're actually able to look at each other's styles of teaching... it's very stimulating to actually observe colleagues... introducing imaginative approaches...'

Additional tutors should not regard their role as merely 'sitting in' on someone else's session but as that of active participants who can do any or all of the following:

- assist with group maintenance, facilitate participation by quieter members;
- add a different perspective;
- add extra information or expertise;
- develop materials from within the group;
- offer support to students with difficulties;
- give feedback, support to tutor leading session;
- lead small groups, exercises, etc.

Tutors need considerable group skills to plan and work co-operatively in this way, and a commitment to team teaching makes success more likely. However, problems do arise within any group of people who work together, and this is where clear leadership is needed, either within the team itself or from the organising body. Divisions often occur along structural lines such as the difference between full-time tutor organisers and part-time tutors on short-term contracts. Part-time tutors often feel powerless in relation to policy decisions while at the same time having to implement the decisions in their work with students. If conflicts of this sort are not resolved quickly, tutors can lose the impetus to be creative in their teaching methods and either revert to standard classroom techniques or find alternative and less demanding employment. The organisation then loses the accumulated expertise and has to spend time and money training new tutors.

PRE-COURSE PREPARATION

It is essential that tutors have sufficient time, prior to the course, to get to know each other and develop working relationships. Pre-course preparation should include:

- induction into the educational objectives of the institution;
- agreeing on a set of aims and objectives for the course;
- discussing suitable approaches to teaching/learning;
- sharing information on the skills, experience and subject areas of team members;
- clarifying the expectations of the organising (employing) body with regard to the administration of the course;
- clarifying or allocating roles and responsibilities, e.g. evaluation, writing student reports, tutorials, organising the creche, publicity and student selection;
- discussing the range of possible problems that students might encounter on the course and developing guidelines for dealing with them and support for tutors.

TEAM MEETINGS

No amount of pre-course preparation or training can foster good group relations better than actually working together with students. Building understanding and trust goes on throughout the course and some situations cannot be foreseen. It is therefore essential that tutors have regular (preferably weekly) meetings if they are to present a coherent course to the students and give each other the support necessary to sustain their enthusiasm and commitment.

Team meetings are also needed to:

- make long-term plans for the course;
- make detailed weekly plans;
- make changes to plans in response to new situations;
- review previous week's work;
- generate new ideas by 'bouncing off' each other;
- keep track of individual students' progress or problems;
- discuss homework and tutorials.

'I think those team meetings, actually, were absolutely critical, and I got a tremendous amount out of them... I think it's what gave the whole thing coherence to what could very easily become terribly patchy.'

MODELS OF TEAM TEACHING

Various approaches to team teaching are possible and will usually reflect the leadership style of the team leader. Organisational pressures can also affect how a team, and a team leader, can operate. The following three examples illustrate a range of possibilities.

- (1) A block programme is worked out (e.g. three weeks on education followed by four weeks on politics, etc.) and a tutor is allocated overall responsibility for each block. Individual sessions are then organised by different tutors within each block.

Advantages: Everyone knows what they are doing in advance, what their contribution is and when they need to be present. The students can be given the programme in advance so they have a better idea of what the course covers.

Disadvantages: Sessions do not always follow on from each other and links between sessions are not always made clear. Confusion can arise over homework being set by one tutor and not being picked up the following week. There is a constant pressure not to run over time into someone else's session. It is difficult to fit in extra sessions on evaluation or study skills.

- (2) The team decides what topics they would like the course to cover and discusses how these can be related to each other. Each week is discussed in terms of content and best method of approach; information is shared and ideas are 'bounced around' before deciding who will present which exercise or activity. All the tutors are present throughout the course so each day is regarded as a whole session.

Advantages: Everyone knows what everyone else is doing and has a part to play in every session. This gives both continuity and flexibility, especially with regard to time.

Disadvantages: It takes longer to prepare in the group (though less individual time elsewhere) and demands more co-operation between team members, both in the meetings and on the course itself. It is important that tutors share similar views on working and teaching (though not necessarily on the topic being taught).

- (3) A co-ordinator runs several courses, drawing on a team of tutors and outside experts. The co-ordinator would be responsible for time-tabling (in a traditional sense) and for giving each course overall continuity and coherence.

Advantages: Everyone would know what was expected of them in advance and would probably work only in those areas in which they felt most comfortable. Students would also know what to expect each week. It could be a more effective use of resources.

Disadvantages: All the administration and responsibility would fall on one person. There would be less team spirit and less opportunity to support each other. Tutors could feel less in touch with students, and students would experience the course as similar to a school situation. Time pressures would reduce flexibility.

The greatest benefits of team teaching arise from the second model, but this is also the most difficult to organise successfully as it relies heavily on the attitude and previous experience of team members. Some tutors find it hard to work in this way, especially if they have previously taught in a more traditional, individual setting. The majority of teams will fall somewhere between models 1 and 2, making as many joint decisions as possible but ultimately relying on individual expertise for the success of each session.

TUTOR TRAINING

'Second Chance to Learn' demands a range of skills from tutors, including:

- interpersonal skills in working individually with students;
- group skills, both in working with groups of students and as a member of a team of tutors;
- counselling skills
- teaching skills using a range of methods which encourage participation by students;
- intellectual skills in subject specialisms and the development of appropriate materials.

It is therefore essential that institutions pay considerable attention to the training needs of teaching staff.

Although team teaching and pre-course preparation can be regarded as continuous training, new tutors may need particular help in some of the following areas:

- Induction into the employing organisation and the background to 'Second Chance to Learn' provision. Understanding the aims and objectives of the providers, as well as those for the course, should assist the smooth running of the course.
- Study skills are not included in many discipline-based courses and although tutors may have acquired these skills themselves, they may not have experience of teaching them. This is especially important where students need help with basic literacy and numeracy.
- Participatory methods demand considerable skill and imagination to work well, and tutors may need an opportunity to practise running role-plays and simulations. They also need to know what resources and contacts are available within the organisation.
- Tutorials are new to some tutors and they may need help in organising one-to-one work. They may also need help to develop a method of negotiating a 'learning contract' with students.
- Counselling and guidance

Some of these activities could be conducted within the tutor team itself, sharing materials, information and skills. It is important, however, to tackle training needs more systematically and specifically. Organisations should examine their existing training programme to ensure that adequate opportunities exist. Tutors could also be encouraged to make use of ACSTT Stages I and II where available.

'... on any course I'm looking for ways of bringing along two tutors where one is the norm... You can look on it as... improving the quality of provision and as a form of training.'

COUNSELLING AND GUIDANCE

The provision of counselling and guidance is a significant, though sometimes problematic, part of a 'Second Chance to Learn' course. It places a considerable burden on tutors who may not feel that they have the necessary skills or resources to meet the variety of needs involved. They may need training in counselling skills and in what is available locally in adult education in order to help students make realistic decisions about their futures.

In the FEU report on the counselling and guidance role of the tutor in vocational preparation⁶, JC Miller (1982) identifies four stages at which intervention is usually necessary: selection, induction, experience and transition. These stages are used in Box 7 to illustrate the needs of 'Second Chance to Learn' students.

BOX 7

COUNSELLING AND GUIDANCE NEEDS OF STUDENTS

SELECTION	ensuring that students understand the nature of the course and the commitment involved, assessing the students' needs and informing them of possible problems associated with attending the course
INDUCTION	encouraging students to work as a group, raising confidence by validating students' experience and identifying areas of interest and skills needed
EXPERIENCE	assessing progress of work and identifying and overcoming learning blocks, encouraging autonomy in learning
TRANSITION	evaluating work done, discussing and advising on possible future directions, informing students of other opportunities in local areas, supporting them in applications to other bodies or employers

Although these stages apply to all adult education courses to some degree, they are especially relevant to 'Second Chance to Learn' courses because of the previous educational experience of the students. Some students need more help during the first two stages, when overcoming fear of ridicule and failure is most important. Once these students feel safe to take risks within the group they often make startling progress. For the more able students who quickly overcome their initial worry and find (to their surprise) that the level of work demanded is within their capabilities, more work may need to be done at the transition stage. Their need is for information about work or study opportunities and support while making decisions and carrying them out, e.g. applications for jobs or grants for higher or further education. Some students need support at a more personal level if they are to complete the course at all and break the pattern of failure to finish what they have started. Emotional blocks to learning are not uncommon and if they are to be overcome, the student will need considerable individual attention. Individual tutorial time is essential if the diverse needs of students are to be identified and met.

'I became frightened of what I would learn about myself and my life. I continued because I realised I couldn't change my life – and learn how to learn – without facing up to why I had always failed/opted out of formal learning. At this time I was beginning to have memories of my father sexually abusing me and I was frightened that I was going mad. T's tutorials and the group supported me through that.'

Tutors reading the two previous subsections may well feel overwhelmed by the range of educational, personal and practical difficulties that have been identified. There is much discussion in 'Second Chance to Learn' circles about whether tutors are expected to be social workers, welfare rights experts, therapists, experts on educational provision and careers officers as well as teachers. Input in all these areas is normally required at some time during the course, and tutors should consider:

- where they require training of some kind;
- where experts could be brought in;
- what resources they would need;
- what they cannot deal with at all.

In the last instance, it may be worth compiling a directory of people and places, including self-help groups, that students could be referred to if necessary. In educational circles alone the range of provision, complexity of enrolment procedures and rapid changes in what is available make it difficult for anyone to be fully up-to-date with the opportunities available. It is therefore unrealistic to expect part-time tutors to be able to encompass all this without considerable support from full-time staff.

'...it's happened more than once. Not only emotional difficulties but sometimes just a practical problem like, "My money hasn't come this week from social security"... somebody can actually do that while somebody else is taking the rest of the session.'

Despite the heavy demands made on tutors, they were mostly positive about working with the students in this way. All the tutors had a definite commitment to working with unemployed adults and disadvantaged groups. They enjoyed working from people's experience, helping them to make sense of that experience in a positive way. Most tutors seemed to feel that they got as much from the students as the students got from them.

'I think it has been the most satisfying course that I've ever been involved in in terms of what people have gained personally from it.'

'Second Chance to Learn' courses differ from most other adult education provision in that they offer individual tuition on a regular basis in addition to the course-day and residential period. The opportunity to work closely with one tutor is greatly appreciated by the majority of students, some of whom would otherwise be unable to complete the course. Since 'Second Chance to Learn' students are drawn from those groups who have benefited least from traditional schooling and who are unlikely to have developed effective study skills, they often need considerable help and support to acquire those skills. Students vary considerably in their abilities and it is possible to have those with basic educational problems in the same group as potential degree-level students. Without tutorials it would be impossible to cater for all the educational needs of students and to ensure that progress is being made. Similarly, students often have practical and personal problems which interfere with learning, and considerable support at a personal level is sometimes necessary. For many students, the fact that they are receiving individual attention acts as a spur to increased confidence and participation in class.

'(Student) made no systematic use of tutorials but felt happy to ask for them when he wanted them. At the beginning of the course he used them a great deal, usually to discuss the nature of the course itself, about which he had several doubts. Once these were out of the way, he started to turn up and join in the class a lot more.'

CONTENT

Tutorials add to the flexibility of 'Second Chance to Learn' courses by enabling tutors to be more responsive to students' needs and interests. They also function at an organisational level to support and extend the work done on the course-day. The specific content of tutorials must be worked out by the student and tutor but will usually fall into one or more of the following areas:

- clarifying the work done on the course-day;
- help with, and discussion of, homework;
- identifying and working on particular needs, e.g. study skills, creative writing;
- extending more able students by working in more depth;
- encouraging students to pursue their own areas of interest, e.g. project work, background reading;
- providing personal support/counselling or referral to other agencies;
- providing information on further education/higher education and supporting applications for further study;
- assisting students to fill in application forms or attend interviews for jobs or in relation to state benefits.

Clearly not all of these activities can be included in every tutorial, but all students will need assistance with most of them at some time during the course. The list above also indicates how students' needs change over the period of the course. The early sessions may concentrate on identifying needs or problems, and the later sessions with helping students 'move

on', both in their own learning and after the course, while some activities like clarifying course work, helping with homework and offering personal support will run through all the tutorials.

ORGANISATION

Tutorials provide an opportunity for students to discuss their learning needs in the context of the course and for tutors to provide appropriate educational and personal support. An advantage of this is that students can develop learning contracts with their personal tutors that are related to their specific needs. The first tutorial should therefore be used to discuss what the tutorials are for and reach some provisional agreement on what each individual student wants to do. This requires a joint assessment of where the student is starting from and where he or she wants to get to. It would be useful to look at the following types of questions:

- At what level is the student now? (Do they need help with basic skills like spelling and grammar or are they more concerned about presenting an argument?)
- How much time does the student have to give to the course (and what practical problems will they face when studying)?
- What is the student interested in doing?
- What does the student hope to do after the course? (Some students will not have specific plans but others may want to apply for full-time courses.)

Care must be taken to ensure that the contract does not become too rigid, as students' needs and interests may change over the period of the course.

Before embarking on tutorials, tutors and organisers should consider what training and materials they require in such areas as:

- assessing students' needs and abilities;
- literacy and numeracy work;
- access to further/higher education, availability of other courses or training in the area.

If students are to be encouraged to pursue their own interests, tutors may be faced with a situation in which they have no knowledge of the subject area.

Some thought should also be given to how students are to be assigned to tutors. Some tutors prefer to present themselves and their interests and abilities to students and let them choose for themselves who they want to have tutorials with; others prefer to allocate students to tutors on the basis of expressed interests or needs. However, there is no guarantee that two people who share an interest in women's writing or social history will necessarily be in sympathy with each other in any other area. Some compromise can be reached by allocating students to tutors on the understanding that if they wish to change tutors later in the course, they are free to do so.

Tutors should keep careful records of what has been agreed and what has been accomplished. Not only does this provide valuable data for course evaluation but it also helps students see the progress they have made.

PROBLEMS

The majority of 'Second Chance to Learn' students have no experience of one-to-one learning and can become very anxious about it and unwilling to attend. They either associate it with the remedial work done in schools, which smacks of failure, or they fear that their 'failures' will become too apparent. Students therefore benefit from having the reasons for the inclusion of tutorials in the course explained to them, and from having

clear guidelines set out as to their use. Tutors themselves often have no experience of one-to-one teaching and may find it difficult to develop suitable methods of helping students to work while giving them the personal support necessary. Tutorial work makes heavy demands on tutors' teaching skills and on their emotional strength. The type and severity of some students' problems combined with the need for confidentiality can be a strain on tutors, who may feel inadequate to the task. Tutors therefore need considerable support themselves, and developing clear guidelines on how far their responsibilities extend will help to alleviate some of their anxiety.

'(Student) needed lots of time to sort out personal problems as these usually got in the way of further learning... Constantly needed confidence boosted as very sensitive to others' reactions to her.'

Part-time tutors often find it difficult to arrange several separate one-hour teaching sessions each week, with the necessary individual preparation, if there is no base to work in. Many students also experience practical difficulties in attending tutorials, especially if help with child-care is not available. Policy decisions should be made on such questions as:

- How much pressure should be put on students to attend tutorials?
- Will tutorials be held in students' or tutors' homes if other premises are not available?
- Will students' travelling expenses be met?

'... there were always two children there. On one occasion there was her estranged husband and her mother there as well, who all joined in... and usually the television was on.'

Organisers should bear in mind that students who find attending tutorials difficult may feel they have to drop out of the course altogether.

The cost of tutorials is very high and can more than double the tutors' fees for a course. Problems can arise over the payment of tutors on a piece-work basis. Part-time tutors on short-term contracts are understandably reluctant to commit themselves to a system which makes their earnings uncertain week by week (or month by month). However, the take-up of tutorials by students appears to increase when tutors are paid on a piece-work basis.

Despite the cost and problems involved in organising a tutorial system, the educational value of individual work to support group learning on the course-day is clear. Students appreciate having a personal tutor to whom they can turn when difficulties arise. They know that if they have not fully grasped subjects covered on the course-day, they can go over these (in private) and will not get left behind. They can take the risk of getting something wrong or appearing silly which they may not feel able to do in front of the group. They can spend time on a piece of work with the tutor before reading it out in front of the group and take some topics further than is possible on the course-day. Some students quickly grasp the opportunity to develop their own areas of interest and work on projects not covered by the course. Tutors also enjoy the opportunity to work closely with a small number of people whose progress can be more clearly seen in this setting. Where tutorials are fully integrated into the course and not regarded as an optional extra, the quality and breadth of learning that takes place is considerably increased.

'... you could do a Second Chance course without tutorials, but I think the quality of it would be far, far less... because the amount of learning that goes on is really spurred on by having tutorials.'

'Of 100% importance! (especially in becoming familiar with the uses of percentages). Would like more time in them, as working at home is sometimes hard.'

For most 'Second Chance to Learn' students, the idea of attending a period of residential study that is not related to work but entirely for their own benefit is new and a little frightening. In view of the practical difficulties they must overcome to attend, it is surprising how many students manage to attend for the whole period. The reasons why it has been found beneficial to include residential in 'Second Chance to Learn' courses fall into three main areas:

- (1) Students are freed from the normal pressures of life and can concentrate more fully on their studies.
- (2) The group becomes more cohesive because of the increased contact and opportunities to get to know people better.
- (3) The type of work that can be undertaken at a residential extends the range of options open to tutors.

LEARNING

Most adult students find it difficult to work at home. A woman with a husband, three children and a part-time job will have difficulty finding the time, space and energy to work methodically; sometimes getting to the library for an hour is a major achievement. Alternatively, a single, unemployed man in a bedsit may have time and space but lack the confidence and motivation to work alone. Since most 'Second Chance to Learn' students have not developed effective study skills at school, they find it hard to achieve the discipline needed for successful study.

A comparison (Box 8) of the responses of students to questions about studying at home and what they enjoyed about residential periods clearly shows the potential for effective learning that residential study creates for adults.

For students who hope to go on to full-time further or higher education, a residential period gives them a taste of student life and the demands of extensive study.

'Being there and getting up and knowing that there is a task to be done and something to produce without being interrupted to do housework, etc.'

'Worked longer hours – worked very hard because of the hours. Felt like a student in college – up till 8 or 8.30 at night. Also tutors said we could work in own rooms if wanted to – given choices.'

GROUP COHESION

Developing strong supportive groups is an important part of 'Second Chance to Learn' because much of the work is carried out in the group and not through individuals studying alone. Where the emphasis is on co-operation and not competition, and the students are encouraged to draw on their own, very diverse, life experiences, a high degree of trust is necessary. Group work is useful in building students' confidence and helping them to improve the social and communication skills that are necessary for the move to further education and community involvement.

HOME

RESIDENTIAL

- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) Difficult to find the time – has to be fitted in between other jobs or late at night when tired | Feel more relaxed because have more time |
| (2) Constant interruptions – (especially children) | Space to be yourself – to work continuously |
| (3) Nowhere suitable to work, out of the way of the family and television | Use of library and/or private study-bedrooms |
| (4) Never have right books or materials when need them, so get stuck | Access to library and tutors on hand when needed, or other students |
| (5) Difficult to keep attention because of other demands on you | Able to concentrate on self without feeling guilty |
| (6) Find it hard to work alone, get stuck and don't know what to do | Group support, interaction increases creativity |
| (7) Hard to work when faced with pressing life problems | Distanced from day-to-day problems so can think more objectively |
| (8) Spouse doesn't understand why doing it – undermines confidence | Studying regarded as positive behaviour – encouraged by tutors and other students |

A residential period, because it takes people out of their normal environment and places them in close proximity for a longer period of time, is a good place to develop group relations. Free periods and mealtimes increase the amount of informal interaction, and this also helps people to get to know each other. It can also be used to develop better understanding between students and tutors and so break down some of the myths surrounding 'professionals' and 'teachers'.

'More time to talk to tutors – especially in the evenings.'

'A more creative atmosphere because more interaction.'

CONTENT

Residential periods offer an opportunity to pursue sustained study in a setting which is conducive to such work. The availability of a library or private study bedroom means that individuals and small groups can be introduced to new ways of working which would be difficult to fit into the normal course-day. Small-scale projects are a good example of this. Many students went to school before project work became popular and do not know how to carry them out. Introducing projects during a residential period enables students to work through the whole process from inception to presentation, with tutors and materials available when needed.

When students are removed from their normal roles and responsibilities, they find they have more energy, and this can be directed into new and creative areas of work. If the atmosphere is supportive, they may be willing to take more risks and enter into situations more wholeheartedly. The introduction of extensive role-play or drama can be considered where students would otherwise be reluctant to make fools of themselves.

Short taster sessions or options can be used to add variety to the programme. Some form of physical activity is also welcomed by students, who are not used to sitting writing for long periods. This can be incorporated into sessions on creative writing, art, or history, or can be suggested for free periods. Much of what is done will depend on the setting of the residential period (urban, rural, university, house, etc.).

BOX 9

EXAMPLE OF AN EXTENDED ROLE-PLAY

The purpose of the role-play was to give students a better understanding of how public bodies make the decisions which affect their lives.

The Care in the Community sub-committee of the Area Health Authority had £60,000 and the use of a large house to allocate to local groups.

The students were divided into four groups and given background information, leaflets, etc. on the following:

- health and the unemployed;
- mental health and the elderly;
- the Society for Mucopolysaccharide Diseases;
- cervical cancer screening.

Each group was instructed to prepare a detailed breakdown of how they would spend the money, with arguments and evidence to support their applications. They were encouraged to lobby committee members for support.

The Committee was chaired by a tutor, with students taking the roles of:

- a representative of GPs in the area;
- a Conservative councillor;
- a Labour councillor and representative of the TUC;
- a consultant radiographer.

Each group elected a person to present their proposals to the Committee at an open meeting. The Committee agreed to hold its discussion in front of the audience but would allow no interruptions or discussion from the floor. After considerable deliberation they announced their decision.

The students had become very involved in the role-play, especially those who had spoken on behalf of their groups. One person felt that she had let people down because her group had not succeeded in obtaining the money they had asked for. There was considerable discussion around the behaviour of the Committee and the decisions it had taken, and the students were concerned about how realistic the exercise had been. The tutor organiser assured them that it was very realistic.

This exercise involved the students in working closely together, organising written and verbal material, handling figures and making decisions. The students had found it very stimulating and needed considerable debriefing time to work through some of the issues raised.

Students should also have the opportunity to get away from the group (either for private study or relaxation or both) at some time as this reduces the stress of being constantly in a group.

Whatever the final programme contains, it is very important that time is made available at the end for winding-down and evaluation. The more successful the residential period, the more important this is. Students need to be aware that their enthusiasm and desire to share the experience may not be appreciated by their families.

ORGANISATION

The success of a residential period depends on good organisation and planning. Students who have had difficulty getting there want to use the time to full advantage and not waste any sorting out sleeping arrangements or doing what they could easily do on a normal course-day. If the course is made up of too many unrelated activities, it appears fragmented and confusing to students. Choosing a theme helps overcome this.

Since practical arrangements can easily go wrong, it is essential that there are sufficient tutors for one to sort out any problems while the others carry on with the programme. Obviously, arriving before the students and being familiar with the layout is a good idea. It is useful to establish good communication with the host organisation to ensure that they understand the needs and problems of the students. It is often the case that final numbers differ from the plans because of a last-minute family crisis. If some people are attending for only part of the time, the numbers for meals can vary and this often creates confusion.

Tutors find residential work very demanding and should therefore plan time for themselves and for short meetings into the programme. It is tempting to overplan the time available and feel that every minute should be filled with activity of some sort. However, adults are capable of organising themselves and choosing what they want to do from what is available. They should not be encouraged to feel dependent on the tutors. A timetable of events or sessions should be made available; involving students in the planning stage helps overcome any feelings of uncertainty about the purpose of the residential period.

The timing of a residential period is often debated at length and, while there is no hard-and-fast rule about the best time to hold one, the benefits of group cohesion are lost if it is too late in a course. It has been found that a residential period has a consolidating effect on students, who may use it to decide whether to continue on a course or not. If a course consists of two terms, the residential period can offer an opportunity to change tempo or raise flagging spirits at the beginning of the second term (especially if this also happens to be January or February, when numbers usually drop).

'Excitement and planning it – mostly organised by group – all working together.'

PROBLEMS

If one of the purposes of a residential period is to improve relations within the group, then the question arises about what happens to people who are unable to attend at all or who can only attend for part of the time. Tutors should consider the consequences for both the individual and the group. While individuals can feel excluded if they are unable to attend at all, the work of the group may be disrupted if people arrive late or leave early. Every effort should therefore be made to enable students to attend the full period.

A similar problem arises over students who are unwilling or unable to leave their children. Even if a creche is made available, this can only occupy the children for part of the time and students usually have to take care of them during meal breaks and in the evenings. They are then unable to use this time either for extra study or for social activities with other group members.

Another area of concern for tutors is the emotional well-being of the students, most of whom will never have experienced residential study before and some of whom will never have been away from their families before. While most students are more anxious about being away from home before the event rather than during it, students who have serious problems in their home or personal lives can find the freedom from those problems emotionally disturbing. Problems within groups can also come to a head due to the increased contact. All these need sympathetic handling in order to prevent their disrupting the whole programme. It is therefore essential that there are sufficient tutors to deal with problems apart from those necessary to lead the sessions.

The majority of students are very enthusiastic about residential periods and seek opportunities to attend more. They enjoy the freedom from their normal routine and the opportunity to pursue an interest that is often not shared by their family and friends. Making time for themselves is a common problem for adults whose lives are dominated by their roles and responsibilities. They find 'being a student' for a short time intellectually invigorating. The range of possibilities opened up by residential study means that tutors can be more imaginative in their teaching methods and expect increased participation by students. It is an opportunity to challenge students while at the same time encouraging a mutually supportive environment in which to work.

'Main advantage was getting to know others better, and it appeared a nice carefree way to work: even though we worked quite hard, we enjoyed it.'

There is an increasing interest in evaluation in adult education. Courses like 'Second Chance to Learn', which have no external form of assessment (e.g. exams) and no set syllabus, are particularly in need of a systematic approach to evaluation. Unfortunately, evaluation is often regarded as an external process fulfilling the requirements of managers, administrators or funders, instead of an integral part of the course which benefits both tutors and students. Evaluation encourages reflection on the past in order to inform decisions about the future.

'The students really did sit down and think, "Where have we got to and where do we want to go?" So that, half-way, one (questionnaire) was really worth doing.'

KEY AREAS

Although all aspects of the course deserve critical attention, a balance has to be struck between token form-filling and producing an overwhelming mass of data that no-one has sufficient time to analyse. It is, therefore, necessary to identify a number of key areas and then develop suitable methods for approaching them.

Suggested key areas for a 'Second Chance to Learn' course are given below, with comments based on the experience of tutors on the courses covered by this research.

Practical arrangements

Clearly, tutors need to know whether students are experiencing any problems with actually attending the course, e.g. timing and location. They also need to find out if the setting is conducive to both work and social interaction, especially on new courses, e.g. classrooms, kitchen or canteen facilities and access to library. Tutors and organisers also need feedback on the outreach, publicity and selection procedures. This information can be gathered quickly, early in the course, by questionnaires or through the class committee.

Content and teaching methods

Tutors need to know how far the course is satisfying students' expectations, whether the level of work is right for this particular group and whether or not the methods employed are appropriate. Unfortunately, such questions are particularly difficult for 'Second Chance to Learn' students to answer because the course is so different from their previous experiences and they may not have had clear expectations at the start. Students do not always grasp the educational value of some exercises and their criticisms should be partly regarded as an indication that some sessions were not properly explained. They will, however, know when a session was pitched too low or was badly organised and therefore should always be listened to. Tutors' own judgements are important here, and regular feedback within the tutor team should be encouraged as this is part of the value of having a second tutor present.

Skills

It is possible to have a set of behavioural objectives for the acquisition of skills, but the difference between being able to write an essay and not being able to write an essay is more one of degrees of success (as judged by a tutor) or degrees of confidence (as felt by the student). The best place to assess students' progress is during tutorials within the context of the learning contract. It is possible, however, to ask students to rate a range of skills as to how much they feel they have improved (see Box 10). This allows for relative changes in relation to each student's level of ability. While this approach can be criticised as purely subjective, when considered across a group of students it gives an indication of which skills have not been adequately covered.

BOX 10

EXAMPLE OF RATING SCALE FOR STUDY SKILLS

This question is about which SKILLS you feel you have learnt or improved on the course as a whole. Please circle one of the numbers shown for each of the skills listed.

3 = I learned/improved a great deal

2 = I learned/improved quite a bit

1 = I learned/improved a little

0 = I did not learn/improve at all

Listening skills	0	1	2	3
Communicating your ideas	0	1	2	3
Reading for information	0	1	2	3
Reading for pleasure	0	1	2	3
Thinking critically	0	1	2	3
Note-taking	0	1	2	3
Punctuation	0	1	2	3
Grammar	0	1	2	3
Creative writing	0	1	2	3
Essay writing	0	1	2	3
Number work	0	1	2	3
Graphs and charts	0	1	2	3
Finding information	0	1	2	3
Making sense of information	0	1	2	3
Chairing a meeting	0	1	2	3
Taking minutes	0	1	2	3
Speaking up	0	1	2	3
Getting organised	0	1	2	3

Are there any other SKILLS you feel you have improved?

Personal development

This is a particularly difficult area to discuss in terms of measurement. It should be remembered that the course is attempting to meet a diverse range of needs and is only a minor part of each student's life. There are, however, two specific concepts which can be pursued. One is students' confidence in their ability to learn and the other is confidence in relation to other people. 'Second Chance to Learn' courses have had noticeable effects on both of these.

Tutors will get most of this kind of information through informal contact with students or during tutorials. It is possible, however, to ask general questions about students' perceptions of themselves and to ask specific questions about their future plans.

BOX 11**SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

- Has the course helped you to gain confidence in any way? Please explain.
- Has the course changed the way you see yourself at all (including your ability to learn)?
- Do you intend to go on to any other courses?
If yes – what and where?
If no – why not?
- What are your plans for the future (education or work)?
Now
Long-term

Background information

Although tutors may be reluctant to ask students for too much information about themselves prior to, or at the beginning of, a course, some idea of where students come from, what their previous educational experience has been and what they hope to get from the course is invaluable. It not only helps tutors to check that they are reaching the people for whom the course is intended but also provides a basis for discussion with students about whether the course is right for them. It can also be used to remind students of the 'distance travelled' during the course. It is impossible to judge someone's progress if you have no idea where they started from.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

There are a range of methods which can be employed, with varying degrees of usefulness, for different aspects of the course. They are presented here as options and elements to be used in combination.

Questionnaires

It is tempting to see evaluation only in terms of questionnaires and reports, but there are limits to the usefulness of questionnaires in a 'Second Chance to Learn' context. When kept short and simple, they are the quickest way to collect information, but many of the questions we would ask about a course are complex and require careful consideration.

Questionnaires are useful in collecting factual information on the students' background and the practical organisation of the course. They can also provide valuable insights into students' feelings and ideas about the course which can be used as a basis for further discussion.

If questions are asked about the content of the course, it is worth reminding students of what they have done.

Structured discussions

Students can be given a small number of questions or statements about the course and asked to discuss them, in small groups. They can also be asked to produce recommendations for future courses. Although this takes time out of the course, it is possible to present it to students as an opportunity to practise group discussion and decision-making skills.

Feedback from questionnaires can be given before the discussion, but students will normally work together better if tutors withdraw, perhaps to hold their own discussion which can be shared with the other group at the end.

Taped discussions

Although students are wary of tape recorders and microphones at first, they soon become less self-conscious and able to produce a useful record of their opinions in a less restricted form than questionnaires.

Tape recorders can be used in several ways:

- simply to record the evaluation discussion in full;
- to record the discussion with the understanding that if they do not want to record any part they can turn it off;
- as a means of making a collective statement after an initial period of working out what they want to say.

All of these require considerable skills on the part of the students if the tapes are to be useful to tutors. Good equipment should be used and students split into smaller groups so that everyone has the opportunity to speak. The evaluation tapes, or typed extracts, can be a valuable resource for tutor training.

Class committee

This can be used as a forum for students to discuss aspects of the course and raise problems or criticisms. It may be appropriate for tutors not to be present during class committees so that students can feel able to raise questions about the course.

Informal feedback

Tutors should be sensitive to the informal conversations that take place during coffee breaks and lunch periods. Students often feel able to say things about content or methods in an informal way that they would not feel confident of expressing in front of the whole group.

'I think there has to be a lot more emphasis on informal evaluation from the tutors' point of view. Dishing out forms, sticking things up on the wall, having interminable discussions doesn't do at all...'

Tutors' meetings

Since 'Second Chance to Learn' courses are not usually planned in detail before the course starts, it is possible for tutors to discuss progress and make alterations during their regular team meetings. Giving feedback on each other's sessions is an effective source of evaluation that can improve the quality of the teaching. Second tutors are more likely to be able to see when individual students are in difficulty and to get an overall picture of the value of a session.

'... it was actually quite a good discipline for us as tutors to evaluate (the previous week) at the beginning of each of our meetings.'

Tutorials

Where students receive regular tutorials they will usually include some discussion of the course-day. Tutors can then feed this information back to the tutor team for discussion and comparison with the comments of other students.

Regular feedback

Some tutors may choose to set aside time at the end of each course-day to discuss how the day has gone. Students may be reluctant to comment at first and be unsure of what they are expected to say. With encouragement, however, an atmosphere of critical reflection can be achieved, especially when it is explained to students that 'criticism' in the literary sense means 'understanding what is happening and acknowledging what is good as well as what is bad.'

Where a second tutor is present, they can make a note of the points raised, and these can then be discussed by the tutors at their next meeting or recorded in a book for future reference.

BOX 12

EXAMPLE OF STUDENTS' COMMENTS ON A COURSE

On the fifth week of a course, students were asked to write down both positive and negative comments on the course so far. The results were written up on the blackboard as follows:

GOOD

- Improving writing skills
- Thinking more about things
- Learning good communication skills
- Interesting discussions
- People listening to one another
- I think the course is going really well and I enjoy the group discussions. I like listening to other people's points of view. Some of the things said are really amusing and fascinating. It gives me something to talk about when I get home

- Enjoy discussions – feel I'm being made to think about people and other aspects of my life
- Gives you confidence
- A beginning to think and read with an enquiring mind; even some success at writing

NOT SO GOOD

- Study a subject in more depth
- Several people missing
- I don't like it when people use long words because I do not understand them and I often feel as if I should bring a dictionary with me
- Worry about homework
- Not sure what is expected of me
- A lack of confidence inside

Most of the activities listed here will occur whether or not they are regarded as part of the formal evaluation of a course. If done in a systematic way, with records kept (e.g. minutes of tutors' meetings or class committees, tutors' diaries), they form an extensive and invaluable source of information for any final judgement about the course.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTION 1

What is 'Second Chance to Learn'?

'Second Chance to Learn' started in Liverpool in the early 1970s, in response to the needs of community groups. It has spread to a number of other places and began in the Berks., Bucks. and Oxon. District of the Workers' Educational Association in 1983. It is concerned with giving working-class people, who have benefited least from the educational system, an opportunity to develop their knowledge of the way society works, their skills and their confidence in themselves and their ability to learn.

SECTION 2

The Students

The students covered in this research attended three courses in Oxford and Milton Keynes, from October 1985 to May 1986. They were mostly women, in the 26 to 45 age group, though some older people were attracted. It proved difficult to reach unemployed men and members of ethnic minority groups in some locations. The majority of students left school at the minimum school-leaving age with no formal qualifications. Although the majority of students had attended some form of vocational or recreational classes at some time in their lives, a significant number had had no contact with educational institutions after leaving school.

Students generally lacked confidence in their own ability and were particularly uncertain about their ability to learn. They had difficulty expressing themselves in writing and underestimated the value of their life experiences and opinions. The course offered an opportunity to reassess their options and to make vocational, educational and personal changes in their lives. They discovered not only that they could learn, but also that they could enjoy learning. They became more confident in new situations and more willing to take up opportunities in education and training.

Although students wanted to attend further courses and many of them actually began them, some found them difficult to complete. Some students were unable to afford the cost of courses (or child-care) and some found it difficult to get discretionary grants to enable them to continue studying. There are still many obstacles to overcome, both educational and practical, before 'Second Chance to Learn' students can fulfil their actual potential.

'Second Chance to Learn' courses are based on group work and participation, with individual needs being met in tutorials. Students claimed that the success of the course and the progress they made resulted from being treated as equal adults by tutors and from the support that came from the group.

SECTION 3

Developing 'Second Chance to Learn'

Courses are expensive because of the number of tutors involved per student and the cost of individual tutorials on a regular basis. Educationally disadvantaged students, however, require considerable support if they are ever to benefit from traditional courses of education or training. **It is recommended that organisations should consider ways in which they might reduce the costs according to the extent and nature of their existing resources.**

Developing 'Second Chance to Learn' provision can make heavy demands on the people and organisations involved. Institutions should be prepared to review their existing policies and procedures with regard to running the course itself and bearing in mind the needs of potential students for easier access. **It is recommended that particular attention should be paid to such areas as payments to part-time tutors for outreach work, methods of fee collection, enrolment procedures and development of materials.**

Reaching educationally disadvantaged groups is particularly difficult because they do not respond to normal advertising methods, not regarding these as being directed at themselves. They need to be convinced not only that the course is relevant to their needs and interests but also that they have the ability to benefit from it. The best methods of outreach and publicity are therefore those which speak directly to them, or through people they already have contact with. **It is recommended that organisations consider visiting local groups, developing a network of contacts, talking about the course in the local media and, eventually, using ex-students to reach potential students.**

SECTION 4

The Course Day

'Second Chance to Learn' courses use a multidisciplinary approach to topics or themes like the media, education and health. Students' own experiences are acknowledged as a valuable starting point from which they can progress to include new ideas or alternative points of view. **It is recommended that topics rather than disciplines should be the focus of study as this enables students to place what is learned in the broader perspective of their lives and their understanding of society.**

Study skills are essential if students are to acquire the knowledge they need and use that knowledge in their everyday lives. 'Second Chance to Learn' is not simply an access course, and study skills are useful in enabling students to participate more effectively in the community and in employment as well as in education and training. **It is recommended that interpersonal, group and communication skills should be encouraged as well as critical thinking and the more traditional study skills, for example essay writing and note-taking.**

'Second Chance to Learn' attempts to encourage students to take control of their own learning by enabling them to make decisions about the content of a course. Since there are a wide variety of topics and activities that could usefully be included in a course, and since students have a range of experiences and abilities, **it is recommended that tutors remain flexible in their approach and willing to respond to the needs and interests of each group of students.**

SECTION 5

The Tutors

'Second Chance to Learn' courses cover a broad range of subjects and skills and run for a full day, with individual tutorial time on an almost weekly basis. **It is therefore recommended that a team of tutors working closely together, with adequate planning time in the form of regular team meetings, should be used in order to give the course coherence.**

Participatory teaching/learning methods make heavy demands on tutors' skills and expertise. Although tutors get some support from working in a team and are, therefore, less isolated than many in adult education, they also work more closely with students and play an important educational counselling and guidance role. **It is therefore recommended that they are given every opportunity to undertake training to expand and develop their skills.**

SECTION 6

Tutorials

Regular individual tutorials enable tutors to work closely with students at the right level and pace for their needs. A learning contract can be established which enables both the tutor and the student to see the progress that has been made. **It is recommended that students who have been out of education for a long time and are lacking in confidence are given the personal attention and support of tutorials.**

Many students experience difficulties with attending tutorials because of their family commitments and the cost of travel. Some tutors are apprehensive about working on a one-to-one basis with students. **It is recommended that both tutors and students are provided with clear guidelines on the uses of tutorials and help in making best use of the time available.**

SECTION 7

Residentials

'Second Chance to Learn' courses include a short residential period in order to give students an opportunity for extended study, to improve cohesion within the group and extend the range of work that a course can cover. The main advantage to students, many of whom are unemployed or single parents, appears to be giving them space and time, away from normal pressures and responsibilities, where they can work without interruptions.

In order to use the time available most effectively, tutors need to consider carefully both the practical arrangements and group maintenance. **It is recommended that time is allocated for students to work in groups and alone, and for social and recreational activities. This requires careful planning and a clear structure. Students should be involved in the organisation of the residential in order to alleviate fears and increase commitment.**

SECTION 8

Evaluation

There is a clear need for systematic evaluation of courses which are new and without any external forms of assessment. **It is recommended that evaluation be regarded as an integral part of the course and of benefit both to tutors, to improve the next course, and to students, to understand the progress they have made.**

Five key areas that should be included in evaluating a course are: practical arrangements, content/methods, acquisition of skills, personal development, and background information on students. While these can be gathered explicitly by formal means, such as questionnaires or group discussion, **tutors should also record information collected by more informal means**, for instance during coffee breaks, class committees. **Team meetings should be regarded as an invaluable part of continuous evaluation which leads to action on the course itself.**

APPENDICES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This report is based on the data collected during an intensive study of three 'Second Chance to Learn' courses which ran from October 1985 to May 1986. It was conducted by one full-time researcher, with part-time secretarial assistance, and relied heavily on the co-operation of all those involved in organising and teaching 'Second Chance to Learn' in Oxford and Milton Keynes.

Most research in adult education is conducted through large-scale surveys and, while these provide essential statistical information on trends, they are unable to reach the experience of individual students or of particular courses. It was therefore decided that this research would concentrate on a small set of related courses. A variety of techniques were employed which drew on both qualitative and quantitative data and which could then be triangulated over time, space, methods and levels as described by Denzin (1970).⁷ Cohen and Manion (1985)⁸ define triangulation as 'the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of human behaviour', and go on to say:

'... triangulation techniques in the social sciences attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint...' (ibid. page 254).

The methods used in this study were:

INTERVIEWS

- All the tutors and tutor organisers were interviewed before and after the courses.
- A number of students were interviewed within the first few weeks of the course, during the second term and six months after the course had ended. (Students were carefully chosen to cover their diversity, taking into consideration age, sex, marital status and ethnic group.)

QUESTIONNAIRES

- Background information was collected on all students who attended selection interviews prior to the course.
- Post-course questionnaires were handed out on the last day of each course in order to reach those people not interviewed.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

- of student selection procedures;
- of the courses;
- of team meetings;
- of evaluation meetings;
- of residential periods.

(It was not possible to attend all three courses or all team meetings every week as two courses were on the same day, 40 miles apart.)

A number of instruments were used to collect a range of additional data, including tutorial records, data from courses and evaluation reports. Copies of the interview schedules and questionnaires used are included in this Appendix.

The range of data collected, including transcripts from recorded interviews, was analysed in several stages.

- (1) Each question was treated individually.
- (2) Where questions occurred in two places, the results were compared for consistency.
- (3) Comments were extracted from interviews, in relation to specific themes, e.g. school experiences, confidence, team teaching.
- (4) When the overall structure of the report had been established, all the relevant data was collected together and considered as a whole, e.g. tutorials, the course day, evaluation.
- (5) Quotations and examples were then extracted to illustrate the points raised.

The experience of the researcher was used, during periods of participant observation and informal contact with both tutors and students, to inform decisions about the interpretation of data. Care was taken to ensure that no one student's views were counted more than once where data had been collected twice, e.g. on the post-course questionnaire and in interviews.

It is recognised that the results obtained by these methods are inevitably subjective but, wherever possible, the analysis of data has been checked by a second person and compared with the views of other people involved in the study. It is also inevitable that not all the data collected has been represented in this report, which was restricted by the time available, the length of the document and the interest of the readers. It is hoped that further papers will be published on specific aspects of the research at a later date.

STUDENT'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION

We would like to understand more about the people who apply to come on a 'Second-Chance-to-Learn' type course. It would be a great help if you could fill in this form before you meet a tutor. Your replies are completely confidential and you need not answer any question you do not want to answer. **THIS IS NOT AN APPLICATION FORM OR TEST.**

PLEASE TICK BOXES WHERE GIVEN

SURNAME FIRST NAME(S)

ADDRESS

TEL. NO. MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐ AGE ☐

1. How did you find out about SECOND CHANCE TO LEARN?

From a friend ☐

Poster/Leaflet ☐

Local press ☐

Through another course ☐

Through an agency
(e.g. social worker) ☐

Other ☐

If other, please explain

.....
.....
.....
If you saw an advertisement, poster or leaflet, please say where you saw it.

.....
If you found out through an agency or other course, please say which one.

2. Are you: Married ☐

Single ☐

Widowed ☐

Divorced/separated ☐

Number of children

Ages

3. What type of secondary school did you attend?

- Secondary modern ☐
Comprehensive ☐
Grammar ☐
Elementary ☐
High ☐
Other ☐

If other, please say what it was

4. At what age did you leave school?

5. Did you take any examinations at school?

EXAM	NUMBER TAKEN		
'O' level	☐	None	☐
'A' level	☐		
CSE	☐		
RSA	☐		

If other, please say what and how many

6. Have you attended any courses since leaving school?

- Yes ☐
No ☐

If so, what were they?

7. At the moment are you: ☐
In paid work, full-time ☐
In paid work, part-time ☐
Unemployed ☐
Self-employed ☐
Caring for home or children ☐
Retired ☐

8. When, or if, you are working, what kind of work do you do?
(Please give a short description.)

.....

.....

9. If you are married, what kind of work does your husband/wife do?

10. How do you spend your spare time (e.g. hobbies, interests, voluntary work)?

11. Do you belong to any clubs or societies?

12. Do you regularly read: Books

Newspapers

Magazines

Don't read very often

☐☐☐☐

If so, what sort do you like?

13. Do you watch television:

Often

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

☐☐☐☐

What sort of programmes do you like best?

14. The following is a list of reasons for attending a SECOND CHANCE TO LEARN course that have been given by students in the past. Please tick any that apply to you.

- ☐ Because it might help me get a job
- ☐ To get out of the house
- ☐ Because I want to know more about society
- ☐ So that I can help my children with their homework
- ☐ To increase my confidence
- ☐ I thought it looked interesting
- ☐ Because I want to go on to further study
- ☐ To make friends, meet people
- ☐ Because I think I can do more than I have in the past
- ☐ Any other reason. Please explain

STUDENTS' FIRST INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Use background information form as a guide or prompt.

Note anything unusual or in need of further explanation – this will start the interview off and lead into one of the following:

ATTITUDE TO EDUCATION

*school experiences
family expectations
adult education
reasons for attending the course*

WORK EXPERIENCE

*type of work, amount of responsibility
future plans, qualifications
relationship to course*

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

*what kind, in what capacity
amount of responsibility involved
family support/problems*

NB: The aim is to pursue these areas only in relation to education, confidence, control and self-esteem, e.g. what influences attitudes, what leads to increased or decreased confidence.

STUDENTS' SECOND INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

NO.

DATE TIME

COURSE

The purpose of this interview is to try to understand what students get out of a 'Second Chance To Learn' course in more detail.

If you don't understand or feel that you can't answer a question, tell me.

I will try to write down what you say. If you disagree with what I have written, tell me and we will work out how it should be phrased.

1. COURSE DAYS (Tues./Wed. only)

(a) What do you enjoy most about attending the course?

Why?

(b) What do you enjoy least about attending the course?

Why?

(c) Which topics or subject areas have been the most interesting?

Why?

(d) Which topics or subject areas have been the least interesting?

Why?

(e) Are there any topics or subject areas that you plan to find out more about?

How?

(f) What do you think about the way the course is run? Is it:

(i) different from school? *How?*

(ii) different from other adult education experiences? *How?*

(g) What do you think about having more than one tutor running the course?
(Positive and negative)

(h) How do you feel about working in groups? (Large and small)

2. TUTORIALS

- (a) *What sort of things have you been doing in your tutorials?*
- (b) *Who decided that you should do those things?*
(Probe: how decided and why)
- (c) *What are the main advantages of having tutorials on a course like this?*
- (d) *Are there any disadvantages?*
(Probe: practical problems)
- (e) *Have you changed your opinion about tutorials since you started?*
(Probe: in what way and why)
- (f) *How could the tutorials be improved?*

3. RESIDENTIAL PERIOD

- (a) *Did you attend the residential?*
(If not, why not?)
- (b) *Have you ever been on a residential before?*
(Probe: where, when, why)
- (c) *If you were given the opportunity, would you go on another residential?*
(Probe: reasons why or why not)
- (d) *How is a residential period different from the normal course day?*
(Why is that?)
- (e) *What are the main benefits of having a residential on a course like this?*
- (f) *Did you have any difficulty arranging to go on the residential?*
- (g) *Did the residential affect the way you feel about the course?*
(Probe: how and why)
- (h) *Did the residential affect the way you feel about the group?*
(Probe: how and why)

4. STUDY SKILLS

- (a) *Roughly speaking, how much work do you do outside the course and tutorial time?*
Which of these most nearly applies to you:
(i) *I often don't manage to do the homework.*
(ii) *I sometimes do more than is needed.*
(iii) *I usually manage to do the homework.*
(iv) *I often do a lot more than is needed.*
- (b) *Have you had any difficulty studying?* (Probe: practical and learning problems)
- (c) *How have you tried to overcome your difficulties?* (Probe: how successful)
- (d) *Have you tried any of the suggestions that the tutors have given on the course?*
If so, which ones and how successful were they?
If not, why not?

5. OUTSIDE THE COURSE

- (a) *Has attending the course caused you any problems at home?*
(How, with whom, why, how handled it)
- (b) *Have you found anything about the course useful in any other areas of your life? (Which and how)*
- (c) *Do you think that anything you have learned on the course will be useful to you in the future? (What and how)*
- (d) *Most people said when they came on the course that they wanted to improve their confidence. Do you think that the course has helped you to become more confident or not?*
(How, why, give examples)

Is there anything else you would like to say about the course?

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

NO. COURSE

- A. Did you attend the whole course? YES/NO
 If NO, about how much did you attend? (A few weeks/about half/most/nearly all)
 Why did you leave? (Any other reasons)
 How did you feel about leaving the course?

- B. Looking back, how would you describe your time on the course?
 Did you learn anything on the course that you have found useful since?
 Did you get roughly what you wanted from the course? What? or Why not?
 Has your opinion of the course changed since you left? How?
 Was there anything missing from the course, anything you now wish had been included?

- C. What have you been doing since the course?

EDUCATION further courses – what, where, why, and if any different from
 'Second Chance to Learn'; was 'Second Chance to Learn' useful
 in getting on; did you get enough guidance on what was
 available?

If NONE, why not; have you tried or are you not interested?

Have you got involved with the 'Second Chance to Learn' Branch at
 all?

WORK have you been looking for or found work since the course, was
 attending the course useful in this, in what way?

WHAT ELSE community involvement, voluntary work, new hobbies, etc.
 (Check against background information sheet.)

Do you think you would have been doing what you are doing now if you hadn't
 been on the 'Second Chance to Learn' course?

- D. Did going on the 'Second Chance to Learn' course change your ideas about
 education? How? Why?

Did it change how you feel about your own education? (Ability?)

Has anything else changed as a result of going on the course?

(I'm thinking particularly about how you feel about yourself. What about your
 family and how they see you?)

What would you say to someone who was thinking about going on a 'Second
 Chance to Learn' course?

THANK YOU FOR SEEING ME. GOOD LUCK

Notes for Researcher

Student No. _____

(Taken from previous interviews and questionnaires)

1. Background information

2. Post-course questionnaire

3. First interview

'SECOND CHANCE TO LEARN' RESEARCH PROJECT POST-COURSE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is intended to cover how you feel about the course now that it is over, how it fitted into your life, and what effect it had on you.

Please answer the questions as honestly as you can – all replies will be treated confidentially.

I am interested in the practical difficulties people are faced with in attending a course of this nature.

1. Have you managed to attend the course: (a) every week ☐
(b) most weeks ☐
(c) only some weeks ☐ (please tick)

If you have missed part of the course, will you please explain briefly why.

2. (a) Have you ever considered giving up the course?
(b) If YES, please explain why and what made you carry on.

3. Roughly speaking, how much time each week have you spent on homework?
- | | |
|--|--|
| (a) Up to 2 hours | ☐ |
| (b) 2 to 4 hours | ☐ |
| (c) 4 to 6 hours | ☐ |
| (d) 6 to 8 hours | ☐ |
| (e) more than 8 hours | ☐ |
| (f) I have found it difficult to do any homework | ☐ (please tick) |

4. (a) Have there been any problems doing work at home?
(b) If so, what were they and how did you overcome them?

I am interested in how easy or difficult you have found the work on this course and which sessions/activities you have found most useful.

5. On the whole, do you think that the level of work on this course has been:

- (a) Too easy ☐
 (b) Too difficult ☐
 (c) About right ☐ (please tick)

6. (a) What aspect of the course have you found the most difficult?

(b) Why?

7. Please look at the following list of activities. Do you think that there should be more, less or the same amount of each type of activity?

- | | MORE | LESS | SAME | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| (a) Discussions | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | (please tick) |
| (b) Small group exercises | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | |
| (c) Readings (work, poetry, etc.) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | |
| (d) Trips and visits | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | |
| (e) Projects | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | |
| (f) Guest speakers | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | |
| (g) Videos, tapes, etc. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | |
| (h) Role-play | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | |
| (i) Set reading (handouts, books, etc.) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | |
| (j) Tutors 'lecturing' | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | |
| (k) Have you any comments to make about any of the activities above? | | | | |
| (l) What other activities do you suggest? | | | | |

I am interested in whether the course has influenced your thinking in any way.

8. *Please say whether any of the following have changed as a result of this course, if so, in what way.*
 - (a) *Your attitudes*
 - (b) *Your opinions*
 - (c) *The way you see yourself (including your ability to learn)*
9. *Has the course helped you to gain confidence in any way?*
Please explain.
10. *Has this course affected your lifestyle in any way (e.g. hobbies, interests)?*
If so, please explain how.
11. *Has this course influenced your television viewing at all (e.g. amount of time, type of programme)?*
If so, please explain how.
12. *Has this course influenced your reading habits at all (e.g. amount of time, books, newspapers)?*
If so, please explain how.
13. *Has attending this course had any effect on your relationships with other people outside the course?*
If so, please explain who and in what way.
14. *What are your plans for the future? (Education or work)*
 NOW
 LONG-TERM

15. *If your plans have changed as a result of attending this course, please say in what way.*

16. *Do you feel that, on the whole, this is the right sort of course for people in your situation?*

Please explain why.

17. *Have you recommended this course to anyone else?*

If YES, please say who and why.

If NO, please say why not.

18. *If there is anything else you would like to say about the course, please write it here.*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

TUTORS' FIRST INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

(a) *BACKGROUND INFORMATION*

age, family

*age left full-time education, qualifications, anything since
work experience, teaching experience*

life experiences useful/relevant to 'Second Chance to Learn'

(b) *MOTIVATION*

teaching adults in general

'Second Chance to Learn' type courses in particular

(c) *AIMS*

related to course

related to self

(d) *STRATEGIES*

overcoming learning blocks

enabling, supporting

team teaching

(e) *PROBLEMS*

on the course

organisational

individual

(f) *RESEARCH*

aims

expectations

problems

(g) *ANY QUESTIONS*

TUTORS' SECOND INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. *How do you think the course has gone on the whole?*
2. *What aspects of the course are you most pleased with?*
Why?
3. *Are you disappointed with any part of the course?*
Which? Why?
4. *Are there any changes you would like to see made to any of the following on future courses?*
 - (a) content
 - (b) method
 - (c) setting (including creche)
 - (d) publicity and selection
 - (e) residential
 - (f) tutorials
 - (g) evaluation
 - (h) team meetings
5. *How do you feel about team teaching?*
6. *Do you think that three tutors are necessary for a course like this?*
Why?
7. *What aspects of the course do you think students will find most useful in the future?*
Why?
8. *Has the research been a problem; if so, in what way?*
9. *Is there anything else you would like to say about the course?*

STUDENTS' BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This information was collected by questionnaire when people attended the selection interviews. It was made clear that the questionnaire was neither an application form nor a test. The figures given here refer to the 49 people who were offered places, whether or not they subsequently attended the course. Six people who were interviewed were not offered places and were referred to other courses.

All figures are given as percentages of 49 unless otherwise indicated.

AGE		MALE: 12.2
18-25	12.2	FEMALE: 87.7
26-35	32.6	NB One course was women-only but
36-45	26.5	men still represented less than
46-55	10.2	25% of the mixed courses
Over 55	6.1	
No reply	12.2	

CHILDREN		MARITAL STATUS
No children	12.2	Married 53.0
Adult children (18+)	18.3	Single 18.3
Children under 18	69.3	Widowed 2.0
(inc. 37.7 pre-school)		Divorced/separated 26.5

SOCIAL CLASS (by head of household)*

A	4.1	— upper middle class
B	2.0	— middle class
C ₁	10.2	— lower middle class
C ₂	8.2	— skilled working class
D	20.4	— semi-skilled and unskilled working class
E	55.1	— those at the lowest levels of subsistence, e.g. unemployed, on state benefits, retired

* As used in ACACE Report, 1982¹

EMPLOYMENT

2.0	in paid full-time work
18.3	in paid part-time work
32.6	unemployed
36.7	caring for home or children
4.0	retired
2.0	disabled
4.0	sick

NB The person in full-time work was a nurse on regular nights who did not take up her place on the course. One of the people on sickness benefit attended only twice.

AGE LEFT SCHOOL

12 yrs.	2.0
14	10.2
15	46.9
16	30.6
17	2.0
No reply	8.1

TYPE OF SCHOOL ATTENDED

Secondary modern	38.7
Comprehensive	22.4
Grammar	10.2
Elementary	8.1
Other	16.3
No reply	4.0

('Other' includes schools outside England, and convents)

EXAMINATIONS TAKEN AT SCHOOL

'O' level	14.2
CSE	14.2
RSA	2.0
Other	6.1
None	59.1
No reply	6.1

(One person took both 'O' level and CSE)

COURSES TAKEN SINCE SCHOOL

At least one course	75.5
No courses	20.4
No reply	4.0

The majority of students had taken at least one course of some kind since leaving school, although several students answered 'no' to this question when in fact they had taken a course. *It would appear that they only counted either examination courses or courses they had completed.* For our purposes, all courses — from three days' basic computing to two years' full-time study — were counted as relevant, whether completed or not.

Of the 37 people who had attended some kind of course, the following breakdown is given:

21.6	'O' level
8.1	'A' level
21.6	Typing, shorthand, clerical, book-keeping, etc.
16.2	MSC, TOPS, YTS, etc.
8.1	Full-time courses, e.g. drama school, nursery nursing
40.5	Various languages, art, 'getting to know yourself', sports, yoga
10.8	Job qualifications, e.g. nursing, hairdressing, catering

NB These figures represent the number of people who have taken a particular type of course, not the total number of courses taken.

Spare-time activities

Two people did not answer this question and one person said 'Nothing in particular'. Of the remaining 46 replies, most gave more than one activity, though a small number gave 'reading' as their only hobby. The most commonly mentioned activity was sport (45.6%), including walking, swimming, cycling, keep-fit and badminton. The second most common activity given was reading (34.7%). The third commonly mentioned activity was some form of voluntary work (28.2%), including helping in schools, assisting in a playgroup or voluntary work on the neighbourhood council. 32.6% of replies included some form of domestic or home-related activity, e.g. cooking, dressmaking and gardening. *In fact, 34.7% of people did not have to leave home to pursue any of the activities they mentioned.* This figure does not include the three people (6.5%) who gave replies which suggested that they had no hobbies outside their family responsibilities, e.g. 'usually cleaning house, writing letters and taking children out'.

CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

30.6% belong to some form of club or society, usually in relation to sports or a specific hobby, e.g. dog-training club. Two people mentioned churches and one person a political party.

READING

Percentage of people who regularly read:	Books	67.3
	Newspapers	61.2
	Magazines	38.7

14.2% do not read very often

TELEVISION

Percentage of people who watch TV:	Often	44.8
	Sometimes	34.6
	Rarely	20.4

The programmes people liked best were:

Documentaries (including nature programmes)	36.9
Soaps	32.6
Films	28.2
Comedies	10.8
Serials	6.5
Quizzes and game shows	6.5
Plays	6.5
Anything/everything	10.8

Other programmes that were mentioned included sports, news, current affairs, chat shows, music and cookery.

NB Most people gave several types of programme.

How heard about course

From a friend	28.5
Poster/leaflet	28.5
Local press	22.4
Through another course	6.1
Through an agency (e.g. social worker)	4.0

NB Some people heard from more than one source.

Reasons for attending

79.5	To increase my confidence
63.2	Because I want to know more about society
61.2	Because I think I can do more than I have in the past
55.1	Because I want to go on to further study
44.8	To make friends, meet people
36.7	Because it might help me get a job
36.7	I thought it looked interesting
24.4	To get out of the house
24.4	So that I can help my children with their homework

Other reasons people gave included such things as finding out what they are good at, making up for poor education at school or regretting leaving school too young. Some people mentioned confidence again and the need for basic skills. Two specific reasons were 'Would like to help in husband's business' and 'I feel that I'm not getting any younger – life and social contact is passing me by!'

STUDENT PROFILES

'B' is 33, divorced, with one child aged three. She attended secondary modern school and obtained no qualifications. She reports that her exam year was disrupted by the change-over from secondary modern to comprehensive, but she was, in any case, not asked to do any exams. She failed the eleven plus and comments that her parents 'didn't mind' this.

She told the careers officer that she wanted to do nursery nursing, but because she had no qualifications she was channelled into factory work. She went to technical college to do the National Nursery Examination Board (NNEB) course and was very good on the practical side but was terrified of exams (and still is) and so failed to obtain a qualification. She then went into shop and office work, dealing variously with cashier work, bookkeeping, accounts and statistics.

After several years of marriage, she split up with her husband and went to visit her brother in Australia for a 'rethink'. When she returned, she went to work in a children's residential home. She moved back temporarily with her husband – which she regards as a retrograde step – and they have now split up once again. Before the split, they had moved to a different area for a 'fresh start' but shortly afterwards the husband's job fell through and he had to find other work. Since 'B' and her husband parted, 'B' has been living on social security.

Outside the home, 'B' does voluntary work, for example, in playgroups and for a toy-lending scheme. She is also a member of Gingerbread.

Having enquired about pre-nursing courses, 'B' was told she was too old and that her age and experience would 'undermine' the other students. 'B' was not prepared to accept being 'shelved' and felt sure she was capable of more. She wanted 'to find out what she wants'. One of the main attractions of the course was that it was free and provided child-care. She felt it would lead her on to something else and liked the non-formal, non-exam-oriented style of teaching and the support of the group in learning.

After the course, 'B' reported several changes. She felt it had helped her clarify her options and choose between courses of action. It had given her, as hoped, the confidence to go on to other things, including other courses. It had enabled her to 'look at herself through her past and present and sort out how to make a future life with work as a goal'. She now felt she would like to do some kind of tutoring or counselling work. At a personal level, she thought the course had made her less inclined to make assumptions about others and better able to listen to others' opinions and form and express her own. 'I still have to work out things I say, but I've got the confidence now to say it.' As she had hoped, 'Second Chance to Learn' had helped her on and 'given her the basics'; she 'couldn't have done anything without doing this first'.

'D' is aged 57, married, with one child now 23. He went to an elementary school and left without any qualifications. His education was disrupted both by his father's army career, which necessitated many changes of school, and by the war when 'D' went for long periods without attending any school at all. These spells were spent 'just wandering about' with his brother. When at school, 'D' liked practical subjects and reports a particular fear of maths, which seems to have persisted.

After leaving school, 'D' felt he would like to work 'with his hands in some way' because he felt he 'wasn't a lot of good with his brain'. He got a job as a warehouse boy in an electrical wholesaler's and was asked by one of the customers to go and work for him. This he did and stayed with this company for 33 years as a radio and television engineer. As part of his National Service he trained as a radio operator. He did a City and Guilds course for a couple of years but 'steered clear of the exams' because of his 'lack of confidence in his mathematical ability'.

'D' was involved in martial arts for 15 years and became a qualified instructor, but does not appear to regard this as real learning because it did not involve any written exams. Following a reorganisation at work, as a result of which 'D's' job-status was lowered, he had a nervous breakdown and decided to leave. At the time the course started, he felt temporarily happy but foresaw the financial necessity of getting a part-time job in the not-too-distant future.

Having become 'interested in life again' after his depression, 'D' saw the 'Second Chance to Learn' course as something to 'stimulate him a bit mentally' and as a way of meeting new people. He wanted it to show that, apart from his manual skills, he has 'some sort of brain capacity as well'. This he said he had tried to play down in the past 'because I haven't had the confidence in my own ... academic abilities'.

After the course 'D' said that, in addition to various practical benefits gained (introduction to facilities he had not realised were available, increased ability to express himself in writing, more confidence in job applications and the presentation of work, use of study skills), he felt he had indeed been 'reassured by the course that I still have the ability to learn'. He thought he had become more aware of what he read, more critical and more willing and able to discuss things and to communicate with other people in general. The course had been 'very beneficial in helping me regain my confidence'. His long-term objective was to 'maintain good health and a positive attitude'. After the course, 'D' obtained first a part-time job and later a full-time job as an electrician.

'E', 50 years old, is married with four children aged 30, 29, 27 and 21. She went to a secondary modern school and left at 15 with no qualifications. As a victim of polio, she spent most of her early life in hospital, the situation, as far as her education was concerned, being aggravated by her father's job in the army, which necessitated frequent moves for the family and meant that 'E' lived quite a lot of the time with her grandmother and aunt. She felt she was regarded as something of a nuisance by her brothers because of her handicap. She looked on herself as a misfit and reports that this caused communication problems that have persisted up to the present. She had some early schooling in hospital, but the practical problems – large ward, teacher inaudible, difficulty in concentrating – meant that 'E' missed out on much basic teaching during this important educational period. As a reaction to her own early educational and other problems, 'E' was very active on behalf of her own children, arranging all sorts of activities, 'making sure they stayed together' as a family, and closely supervising their educational progress.

On transferring to normal schooling at 11, she found herself far behind but was not given any special help. At 14, while still at school, 'E' did a two-day-a-week pre-nursery care course. On leaving school, she went to work in a factory. She also attended technical college, studying biology and maths, but reports that the level there was too high.

Before the course, 'E' had recently been made redundant after working five years for an electronics company. She helped her husband set up his own business.

At the time the course started, 'E' wanted to prove to herself that she had 'got a brain up there' and wanted someone to 'turn the key' and help her 'think thoughts herself' and express these in writing. Her main aim, as far as 'Second Chance to Learn' was concerned, was to find 'confidence with people', 'to know that you're the same as other people . . . which is the inner confidence you need'. She wanted to get over the block that prevented her expressing herself and also to conquer the old habit of drifting concentration formed as a result of her early schooling.

As benefits of the course, 'E' mentioned being better informed about facilities and events, as well as having been 'pointed in the right direction'. She said her appetite for learning had been reawakened, that she was 'relearning how to learn', that she could think more clearly and was more flexible in her opinions. However, by far the most important and striking gain for 'E' was the increased confidence the course had given her. She said she was 'not the same person', that she had gone a long way towards overcoming her communication problems and that she was now 'looking outwards'. As she had hoped, the course had given her inner confidence, and she now viewed the prospect of joblessness, previously a source of great unhappiness to her, with more equanimity. She was again helping her husband in his business but this time with much more confidence. 'I've always lived as a face in a crowd, but I'm becoming somebody now, 'cos I'm stepping out and learning'.

A SAMPLE 'SECOND CHANCE TO LEARN' BUDGET

This budget assumes a course with 12 students and two tutors present at any one time, although the overall number of tutors may be more. It does not include the cost of any full-time staff (e.g. tutor, organiser, secretarial support). The figures are based on the experience of the Workers' Educational Association but must be regarded as arbitrary since costs vary considerably between different organisations, depending on their existing resources.

DEVELOPMENT	£
24 tutor hours (outreach + student interviews @ £3.80 per hour)	91.20
Publicity material (printing and advertisements)	200.00
TEACHING COSTS	
2 tutors × 5 hours × 20 weeks @ £8.80 per hour	1760.00
12 students × 15 tutorials* @ £8.80 per hour	1584.00
TEAM MEETINGS	
2 tutors × 1½ hours × 20 weeks @ £3.80 per hour	228.00
RESIDENTIAL	
2 tutors × 10 hours @ £8.80 per hour	176.00
Overnight accommodation	300.00
EVALUATION	
2 tutors × 2 meetings × 1½ hours @ £3.80 per hour	22.80
2 tutors × 10 hours (questionnaire analysis and report writing) @ £3.80 per hour	76.00
CRECHE COSTS**	500.00
TEACHING ROOMS	350.00
MATERIALS	50.00
Photocopying	70.00
STUDENT SUPPORT FUND***	75.00
MISCELLANEOUS	91.00
	<u>5574.00</u>

* Students rarely attend tutorials every week of the course, e.g. during the first week, the week before Christmas and the week of the residential period. There may also be problems with illness and child-care arrangements.

** Creche costs vary considerably depending on the number and ages of the children. If places are to be offered to all students it may not be possible to ascertain the true costs until after the course has started.

*** Many students are on low incomes and without private means of transport. They may need help with travelling expenses to attend the course, tutorials or the residential. It may also be necessary to acquire a minibus to take students on a residential or a visit, e.g. to museums, libraries, etc. This is usually left to the discretion of tutors.

NB The WEA has a development rate of £3.80 for all non-teaching activity.

CHECKLIST FOR PROVIDERS

- (1) Is 'Second Chance to Learn' the most appropriate response to the needs of educationally disadvantaged groups or unemployed people for *this* institution?
- (2) How can it be adequately funded?
- (3) Will new staff be required to undertake this work?
- (4) What are the implications for staff training?
- (5) Will it require changes of policy to be made in such areas as course fees, creche provision and payments to part-time tutors for development work?
- (6) What experience and resources already exist within the organisation which could be utilised or diverted?
- (7) Could this work be done in collaboration with other agencies; if so what are the implications of such collaborations?
- (8) What would this institution gain from running 'Second Chance to Learn'?
- (9) Which key people within the organisation would need to be involved in running 'Second Chance to Learn'?
- (10) What are the implications for our current administrative/financial procedures?
- (11) Do we have suitable accommodation for this course?
- (12) What priority will this work have within our overall framework of provision?

'SECOND CHANCE TO LEARN' SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE

Giving main topic headings and study skills covered each week*

FIRST TERM

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5
Introduction – to course and each other EDUCATION	EDUCATION What is History? Autobiography – reading and writing	EDUCATION Ground rules for discussion Listening skills	EDUCATION Note-taking and memory	HEALTH Brainstorming Decision-making in groups
WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8	WEEK 9	WEEK 10
HEALTH Straight and crooked arguments	HEALTH Debate	HEALTH Understanding graphs and charts	HEALTH Finding information Presenting an argument	Understanding poetry Evaluation Planning meeting

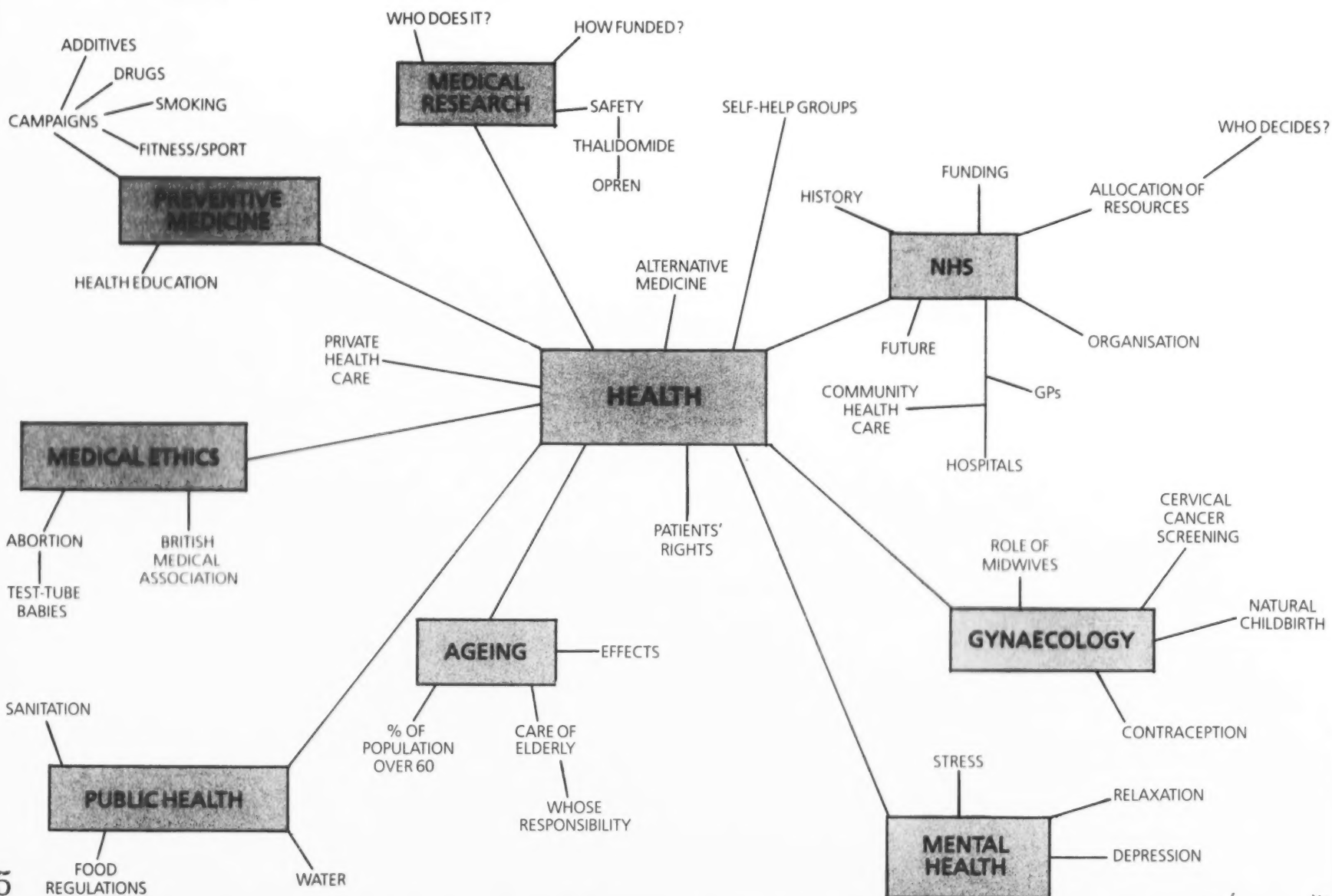
SECOND TERM

WEEK 11	WEEK 12	WEEK 13	WEEK 14	WEEK 15
RESIDENTIAL PERIOD	PARLIAMENT Essay writing Grammar, punctuation, etc.	PARLIAMENT Everyday maths	DAY TRIP TO HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT	THE MEDIA Recognising assumptions
WEEK 16	WEEK 17	WEEK 18	WEEK 19	WEEK 20
THE MEDIA Report writing	THE MEDIA Where to next? Letter writing Curriculum vitae Application forms	THE MEDIA Introduce group projects	Project work in small groups Visual arts and communication	Presentation of projects Evaluation Moving on?

This is an example of what a course might look like after negotiation has taken place

* Some study skills will be dealt with in tutorials

RESULTS OF A BRAINSTORM ON HEALTH



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OBJECTIVES

The objectives for which **The Further Education Unit (FEU)** is established are to promote, encourage and develop the efficient provision of further education in the United Kingdom and for that purpose:

- a) to review and evaluate the range of existing further education curricula and programmes and to identify overlap, duplication, deficiencies and inconsistencies therein;
- b) to determine priorities for action to improve the provision of further education and to make recommendations as to how such improvement can be effected;
- c) to carry out studies in further education and to support investigations of and experimentation in, and the development of further education curricula and to contribute to and assist in the evaluation of initiatives in further education;
- d) to disseminate and publish information and to assist in the dissemination and publication of information about recommendations for and experiments and developments in further education.